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Gender issues in initial teacher education

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GENDER ISSUES IN INITIAL TEACHER EDUCATION

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DEDICATION

I wish to dedicate this thesis to my parents, Willy and Gord Sanderson who have provided me with unconditional love and support.

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the study was to examine preservice teachers' perceptions towards gender issues in education. It also examined whether gender issues are an integral component of prospective teacher training. This was done using focus group methodology supplemented by "self appraisal" questionnaires.

Five themes were persistently a part of the students' perceptions of gender issues. Theses themes were: a) the prescribed roles of males and females; b) the invisibility of gender inequity; c) the importance of practice teaching; d) the belief that gender issues are female issues and; e) the resistance to gender equity initiatives. One theme that emerged from the focus group sessions that was not found in the literature was that of harassment of female student teachers by male teachers and students.

The results also suggest that gender continues to be a major organizational construct within educational institutions and that the problematization of gender continues to be ignored despite increased awareness and discussion of gender inequity in education.

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CHAPTER ONE

Rationale

In February 1996, I was asked to teach a class that examined gender and science education to four preservice science classes as part of my graduate assistantship. I was to introduce gender issues in education and to suggest some practical teaching strategies that could be utilized when teaching science in the four ninety minute classes.

The students' reactions to this topic were, of course, varied, but the consensus seemed to be that gender was not an issue in science education, let alone in education in general. Several students resisted all opportunities to discuss the topic. I found this extremely frustrating both as an instructor and as an advocate for equal opportunities for women/girls and men/boys. I was prompted to explore the research that examined gender and education.

Most research on gender and education has been conducted at the inservice level, that is in schools with experienced teachers. Several studies have examined teachers' expectations for male and female students, teacher/student interaction patterns, and teachers' attitudes, perceptions, and beliefs about gender issues

(Acker, 1994; Becker, 1981; Ebbeck, 1984; McGee Bailey, 1996; Sadker & Sadker, 1980; 1981; 1985; 1985/1986; 1994; Sadker, Sadker & Klein, 1986; Sadker, Sadker & Thomas, 1981). Most educators assume that girls and boys are treated equally in schools. Despite proclamations by some teachers that equity has been achieved, recent research provides evidence that females are not receiving the same quality or quantity of education as males (American Association of University Women, 1992; Sadker, & Sadker, 1994).

Early research by Sadker, & Sadker (1985/1986) indicates that educators were generally unaware of the presence of gender bias and the impact it had on their students. They also suggested that focused training could reduce sex bias in classrooms (p. 512). "By studying what happens to girls in school, we can gain valuable insights about what has to change in order for each student - every girl and every boy to do as well as she or he can" (American Association of University Women, 1992, p. 3).

Several researchers report that very little research has been conducted that examines how gender issues are tackled at the preservice level during initial teacher training (Bourne & Gonick, 1996; Lucidi, 1994; Sikes, 1991; Skelton, 1989; Skelton & Hanson, 1989). In an attempt to identify why boys and girls

continue to receive very different educations, I chose to examine the perceptions held by preservice education students towards gender and education in a one year Bachelor of Education program.

Literature Review

This is a review of the literature on the social context of schooling, gender issues in initial teacher education, and perceptions of education students. These issues are contextualized by an overview of the historical frameworks used to theorize gender.

When examining gender it is essential that the terms "sex" and "gender" be defined. These two terms are often used interchangeably; however, they describe two very different attributes. Titus (1993) states:

> "Sex" designates the biological aspects of a person (the chromosomal, anatomical, reproductive, hormonal, and other physiological characteristics differentiating females and males), while "gender" designates the social, cultural, and psychological aspects of females and males in a particular context or what is considered masculine or feminine by a cultural group. (p. 40)

Many researchers who examine gender issues in preservice education, however, use these terms interchangeably. In this

paper the terms used will be those that appear in the studies cited.

Social Context Of Schooling

Children are exposed to expectations based on gender from the very moment of their birth. The taken-for-granted image of girls in pink and boys in blue indicates the everyday organization of gender. Parents, peers, and schools socialize children into a gendered world such that by the time children enter school they already have an understanding of what it means to be male or female, a boy or girl, masculine or feminine.

This understanding of what it means to be a boy or a girl is often based upon sex-role stereotyping. Children learn that parents and teachers have different expectations for girls and boys. As a result, boys and girls receive very different educations within the same classroom. This reflects the organizational role that gender plays in schools. Gender shapes the behaviours, beliefs, attitudes of students. The problematization of gender ,however, remains unexamined and uncontested.

The majority of research that examines gender issues in education focuses on the interactions between teachers and students. Teachers play an important role in shaping the

behaviours and beliefs of their students. They act as agents of gendered culture. As agents of gendered culture, many teachers treat boys and girls differently. They have different expectations of boys and girls and they transmit their beliefs, values and attitudes regarding gender and gender roles to their students.

Teachers often have sex-differentiated expectations of students and their attitudes and values often closely reflect the traditional stereotypical views that our society holds of males and females (Becker, 1981; Christensen, & Massey, 1989).

A number of studies that examine teachers as agents of gendered culture suggest that females and males are treated differently within the same classroom. Becker's (1981) study of highschool students reveals that females in relation to males receive: a) fewer opportunities to respond to questions, b) less praise and criticism, c) less encouragement and individual help, and d) less teacher attention (p. 50-51). Similar findings are reported by Ebbeck (1984) and Sadker, & Sadker (1985/1986).

Despite supposed increases in gender awareness and the adoption of numerous intervention strategies and policy initiatives to decrease and eliminate gender inequity in education, real change has been slow and somewhat superficial. Research studies continue to indicate that in many classrooms, at all age levels, there are

gender differences in the ways boys and girls are treated by teachers and peers, as well as in how they are taught (American Association of University Women, 1992; Gillis & Griffin, 1982; Ostling, 1992; Yewchuk, 1992).

Studies conducted by Sadker, Sadker, & Thomas (1981) and Shmurak, & Ratliff (1994) suggest that teachers are often not aware of the fact that they are treating girls and boys differently. Sadker, & Sadker (1985) find that "most teachers are surprised to learn that male students receive more attention than female students" and "when alerted to this disparity, they want to change their teaching so that they become more equitable" (p. 361). The second part of Sadker & Sadker's (1985) claim is not consistent with other studies that examine teachers' responses to gender equity initiatives.

In these studies, the recurrent theme is one of teachers' resistance to equity initiatives. Many teachers resist gender equity initiatives because they have come to see gender differentiation as a normal and perfectly natural aspect of schooling (Sikes, 1991, p. 146). Others recognize and acknowledge that gender differentiation exists, but fail to adopt gender equitable strategies into their daily classroom routines and practices (Acker, 1994; Christensen, & Massey, 1989; Evans, 1987;

Mader, & King, 1995; Massey, & Christensen, 1990; Pratt, 1985; Spear, 1985).

Often teachers prefer to remain neutral on issues such as gender because they believe that by emphasizing the differences in treatment that boys and girl receive in schools they might enhances the inequity for girls. Consequently, 'gender blindness', the belief that gender is a difference that does not make a difference, is used as a strategy for improving things for females (Coffey, & Acker, 1991; Scantlebury, 1995).

Other teachers resist gender equity initiatives because they associate gender equity with the term 'feminism', a term that many individuals define as 'male bashing' (Acker,1988:1994; Acker, & Oakley, 1993; Skeleton, & Hanson, 1989). Two false assumptions are associated with this resistance to feminism: first, that gender inequity initiatives favour girls and, second, that improving things for girls must inevitably cause boys to lose (McGee Bailey, 1996, p. 75).

Some teachers fail to adopt equitable teaching strategies because they perceive such initiatives as implying that "teachers' [past] practices and beliefs are, or have been, grievously wrong" (Acker, & Oakley, 1993, p. 261). This implies that teachers are to some degree responsible for, and have maintained, gender inequity

in the their classrooms. Acker & Oakley's (1993) report suggests that teachers do not react favourably to change initiatives if they feel personally attacked or threatened.

The majority of the literature examines how teachers **directly** transmit norms and values to students (Acker, 1988:1994; Goodman, 1984) ;however, some researchers suggests that norms and values can be transmitted **indirectly**. Acker (1994), and Florio-Ruane (1989) argue, respectively, that norms are transmitted as effects of the school's "Gender Regime", or the "Hidden Curriculum". In other words, gender is manifested in everyday school organization and practice.

Acker (1994) defines a "Gender Regime" as the "messages about models of masculinity and femininity that are contained in everyday school practices such as pupil grouping and timetabling and in the sexual division of labour among teachers" (p. 90).
Florio-Ruane (1989) postulates that female and male students are likely to learn more about social norms, power, and prestige in schools than academic knowledge (p. 168). She cites Jackson (1968) when she labels this aspect of schooling the 'hidden curriculum' (p. 34).

Florio-Ruane (1989) suggests that the 'hidden curriculum' is hidden in the sense that it is not formally part of a school's

official curriculum, yet, it is "clearly taught and learned in schools" (p. 168). She further describes the 'hidden curriculum' as a "systematic powerful way to teach students about themselves, their place in the world and what learning might be like" (p. 168). Acker's (1994) research supports Florio's contention that gender is a major organizing principle in the hidden curriculum (p. 93).

The effects of gender inequities in schools are cumulative. Several researchers question how the number of inequities and the length of exposure to such inequities affect students. Their findings demonstrate that the number and degree of exposures to inequitable treatment is as important as the shape of the inequity when determining the effects of such treatment on students. Campbell (1995) writes:

> A single, isolated comment, a micro-inequity, may not have lifelong effect on a child, however, children spend many hours each day with their teacher ... It is the pattern of teacher beliefs and expectations, communicated to children over time, that lends itself to status inequities that have lifelong implications, that is, several micro-inequities will create an inequity. (cited in Piazza, Chevalier, & Caldwell, 1995, p. 212)

As children are exposed to inequity, they might internalize it as part of their values, attitudes and beliefs. Children often respond to the expectations that teachers hold of them. That is, students may behave in accordance with what they perceive to be

teacher expectations. A self-fulfilling prophecy about gendered patterns of behaviour is thus established (Piazza, Chevalier, & Caldwell, 1995, p. 211).

Becker (1981) identifies a three step pattern that explains the effects observed over time of gender differences in class room interactions: first, teachers hold different expectations for their students based on gender, for example, the belief that males are better in mathematics than females; second, teachers treat their students differently based on these expectations (for example, teachers do not spend as much time with females in mathematics as they do with males); and finally, students respond differently in class in accordance with the sex-role expectations of their teacher and of society. For example, females may not demonstrate an interest in mathematics or may opt not to continue to take mathematics (p. 51-52). These three steps outline how students internalize the expectations that teachers hold of them based on their gender.

Gender Issues In Initial Teacher Education

Research that examines teacher/student interactions is usually conducted at the elementary and secondary school levels; however, some researchers have attempted to describe how such interventions affect preservice education students. Bailey, Scantlebury, & Letts

IV (1997), Bourne, & Gonick (1996), Kagan (1992), Skelton, & Hanson (1989) suggest that preservice teachers' expectations, attitudes and behaviours are often determined and influenced by their own school socialization.

Skelton (1987:1989), and Skelton, & Hanson (1989) hypothesize that as pupils, student teachers absorbed the attitudes that teachers displayed toward them based upon their gender such that their beliefs about themselves and others were altered. Sikes (1993) asserts that some student teachers might not have recognized these inequities (p. 20).

Dunkin, Precians, & Nettle (1994), and Kagan (1992) assert that the personal beliefs and images preservice candidates bring to programs of education often remain unchanged by a preservice program and follow the candidates into their course work and student teaching. Skelton & Hanson (1989) stress that when teacher education courses ignore gender issues, student teachers' attitudes and expectations of males and females - attitudes and values that they learned during their own school days - are compounded by their training and, subsequently, re-enacted in the classroom (p. 115).

In addition to retaining perceptions, attitudes and beliefs about gender from their own school days, education students sometimes find themselves in two very different, and often

conflicting, roles: that of a student and that of a teacher. Florio-Ruane (1989) claims that beginning teachers often overlook much of the thought and planning that underlies teacher action, and lack an awareness of the institutional forces that shape or constrain teacher actions because they assume their new professional role as teachers in the familiar cultural setting - they had all been students in a school at one time (p. 163-165). Florio-Ruane (1989) proposes that preservice education students do not question the 'gendered' nature of schooling, its norms, activities and social roles (p. 165). McGee Bailey (1996) argues that education students must be given the opportunity to question the 'gendered' nature of schooling because only when they acknowledge this can they begin to question the ways in which gender influences our schooling (p. 77).

Literature that explores 'gender issues' in teacher education also examines the validity of child development theories, the content of textbooks used during teacher preparation, and the ways gender issues are tackled in teacher preparation. In all three areas, the problematization of gender is ignored.

The first area that is examined is the validity of child developmental theories. Child developmental theories are often based on the works of Skinner, Piaget, Freud, Watson, Kohlberg, and

Erickson, all of whom relied on data drawn from male populations (Lucidi, 1994, p. 31). This androcentricity has been incorporated throughout teacher education curriculums and educational child development courses and has functioned to maintain sex stereotyping and sex discrimination in education (McCune, & Mathews, 1975, p. 298).

The second area examined is the content of textbooks used during teacher preparation. Such textbooks, researchers argue, reflect the nature and scope of the curriculum, and the topics found in these texts are the "ones most often discussed, analyzed, and emphasized in course syllabi, class lectures and discussions" (Sadker, & Sadker, 1980, p. 37).

Christensen, & Massey (1989) conclude that curriculum materials and textbooks used in teacher education programs often demonstrate clear sex-role stereotyping (p. 256). Research conducted by Sadker, & Sadker (1980) revealed that, of the 24 educational texts analyzed with respect to gender issues (two social studies, four foundation, three educational psychology, three science methods, three math methods, five reading, and four language arts), one third of the texts failed to mention sex equity and 23 of the texts allocated less than one percent of their narrative space to the issue of sexism (p. 38 See also Bailey, &

Burden, 1988). Titus (1993) stresses that the lack of narrative space allocated to gender issues in textbooks affects prospective teachers' skills and knowledge of gender issues in education (p. 38).

Researchers have also examined how gender issues are presented in Faculties of Education. Thompson (1989) traced teachers' careers to their initial teacher education to examine how gender issues were tackled in initial teacher education (p. 71). Thompson found that in most cases, gender issues were marginalized on the outskirts of the teacher education programs or were a matter for concern for individuals rather than a central concern of teacher education (p. 72).

In 1989, Jones hypothesized that recent graduates from teacher education programs would tend to show fewer sex-typed interactions than teachers who had many years of classroom experience. The hypothesis was based on the assumption that newly prepared teachers would have different perceptions regarding the rapidly changing roles of women in the job market, more personal experience with gender issues and more exposure to research on gender and education (p. 36).

The results of this study did not support the hypothesis. Teachers at all levels of experience tended to interact more with male students than with female students and appeared to lack the skills needed to alter their gender biased behaviours. Jones concludes that gender, and gender issues, are a neglected area in initial teacher education (Jones, 1989, p. 37).

In a recent study that examined the extent to which gender issues were incorporated into teacher education programs, Mader, & King (1995) surveyed 30 program administers, 247 faculty members and 70 students from 30 teacher preparation institutions across Michigan and found, first, that gender related instruction was not prominent in the teacher programs they examined (p. 5) and, second, that it was advocated much more than it was actually included in courses (p. 6).

A research study conducted by Bourne, & Gonick (1996) examined how gender issues are taken up in one faculty of education in Southern Ontario (p. 25). Focus group sessions with education students revealed that women's issues were not being identified or discussed in any of their preservice education classes. The education students indicated that gender issues were often dealt with in optional seminars lead by students(p. 25). The researchers suggested that expecting preservice students to take on the task of

educating other students about gender-equitable schooling without expert assistance is a common practice in faculties of education (p. 26).

Research studies suggest that gender issues are not a priority in teacher education programs and when they are discussed, it is done in isolation from the main body of the developing teaching philosophy (Acker, & Oakley, 1993; Coffey, & Acker, 1991; Lundeberg, 1997; Masland, 1994; Piazza, Chevalier, & Caldwell, 1995; Sikes, 1991; Versey, 1990; Zaher, 1996). This sends a message to education students that gender issues are not an important aspect of teaching.

Teacher preparation programs fail to provide men and women with the knowledge, skills and support necessary to address the critical issues of gender in schools (Bailey, Scantlebury, & Letts IV, 1997; Campbell, & Sanders, 1997; Priegert Coulter, 1995). The American Association of University Women (1991), and Lucidi (1994) state that it is crucial that preservice institutions provide future teachers with the skills and strategies needed to ensure gender fair education for all students. Not only are gender issues not discussed in teacher preparation, teacher education has functioned to model and perpetuate sex role expectations that

education students experienced in their own school days (McCune & Mathews, 1975; Masland, 1994; Sikes, 1991; Skelton, 1987).

Many researchers call for the inclusion of gender issues within teacher education programs and have suggested ways to do this. The literature contends that teacher educators must review and examine the content of their courses and their teaching methods for gender inequity (Bailey, & Burden, 1988; Lucidi, 1994; Mader & King, 1995; Masland, 1994; Sikes, 1991). Teacher educators must also find out where their students are coming from in terms of their values, attitudes, and beliefs toward gender issues so that they can provide education students with opportunities to reflect upon their own experiences with gender and how these experiences have affected how they apply principles of gender awareness in their own teaching (Bailey, Scantlebury, & Letts IV, 1997; Lucidi, 1994; Lundeberg, 1997; Mader, & King, 1995; Sikes, 1991).

Other researchers call for mandatory gender issues courses in teacher preparation programs (Bourne, & Gonick, 1996; Jones, 1989). I have chosen to highlight four such courses that have been designed and implemented in various teacher preparation programs. These four courses varied in content, materials used, and teaching methods, yet all were implemented to increase education students' awareness of gender issues in education.

In 1978, Myra and David Sadker began a two year project to design a non-sexist teacher program. They developed six non-sexist teacher education units which contained information concerning sex equity and women's contribution to the field of education. Twenty-seven field trials were held at diverse teacher education institutions across the United States of America. In all cases, the faculty and administration expressed interest in providing sex equity teacher training (Sadker, & Sadker, 1981, p. 332-333).

During the field trials, the instructors taught five of the six units in their foundations, psychology and methods classes. They were given complete freedom in how they wished to teach the material and how much class time they wanted to spend on the units (Sadker, & Sadker, 1981, p. 332). Field trial evaluations were conducted at each trial site. The evaluation involved pre- testing and post-testing the attitudes of the students, direct observation of the classes, and interviews with the instructors involved in the field tests (p. 334).

After the implementation of the material, 20 of the 27 field test classes showed an increase in their perception of the importance of equity as measured by the pre-test and post-test attitude survey (Sadker, & Sadker, 1981, p. 333). On the post questionnaire 77% of the 751 students that participated indicated

that, as a result of their reading and class discussions, they had a better understanding of how teachers can influence the sex stereotyping of students (p. 334). Seventy four percent of the students indicated that sex equity should be taught in the course again. These results suggest that the six units were perceived, by the students involved, to be effective and a relevant component of teacher education curriculum (p. 334).

Sikes (1991) piloted an educational issues course in the first year of a four year course leading to a BA (Hons) with Qualified Teacher Status in England. As part of this course, 225 students received a one hour lecture on gender (p. 148). One hundred and fifty five students completed and returned a questionnaire administered to them two weeks prior to the lecture to elicit information from them to be used during the lecture (p. 149).

Most of the students came from middle class homes where traditional sex roles were the norm (Sikes, 1991, p. 152). Most had experienced and observed some form of differentiation based on sex in the course of their schooling (p. 149). They also believed that their pupils conform closely to gender stereotypes (p. 150). The male students that attended the one hour lecture on gender thought that the lecture was biased and presented a raging feminist view (Sikes, 1991, p. 154). The majority of the female students

felt that the instructor had not gone far enough (p. 154). Sikes concludes that a mass one hour lecture is not the most appropriate way of dealing with "sensitive and controversial issues because students need time and support if they are to critically consider their own position and views" (p. 155).

Cook & Riley (1992) organized and conducted a compulsory gender issues course at the University of Ottawa. The half credit course was introduced as part of a general reorganization of the post-degree, Bachelor of Education program (p. 22). The objective of the course was to consider the role of gender issues in adolescent and teacher development in the school curriculum, organizational structure and their interactions (Cook & Riley, 1992, p. 23). There were four major themes in the course: the Ontario educational system as gendered, teachers as gendered leaders, students as gendered clients, and curriculum as a gendered record (p. 23).

Although the course was strongly supported by students, some thought the course was motivated by "feminist zeal" (Cook & Riley, 1992, p. 24). Cook and Riley both felt that the course encouraged discussion of important value-laden procedures and curricula in education. They also felt that the preservice students were provided with analytical tools to go beyond simply identifying

sexism and that the students could create environments in which equality thrives (p. 25).

In a similar intervention, Piazza, Chevalier, & Caldwell (1995) conducted a project that "infused" gender equity into a teacher education program at Boise State University (p. 213). The equity infusion occurred in the senior year, prior to student teaching. There were three components to the "infusion" program: reflective examination of conceptual realities of males and females, construction of equitable pedagogical strategies and observation of students' interaction patterns in practice teaching assignments (p. 214-215).

From their teaching practicum, the preservice students recognized that the equitable practices they had been taught in teacher education were not always used by teachers in schools. When the students examined the interaction patterns with students that had been recorded during their teaching practicum, they were shocked and embarrassed that awareness of gender issues did not guarantee equitable behaviour and expectations towards male and female students (Piazza, Chevalier, & Caldwell, 1995, p. 215).

All four courses attempted to provide students with an opportunity to reflect upon and examine gender issues in education; however, the success and failure of these courses was difficult to

measure due to limited documentation. Perhaps the only definitive conclusion that can be derived from these four courses is that gender issues cannot effectively be addressed in a single time period. Further research is required to examine the implementation of gender issue courses, their effects on student teachers, and to measure how participation in such classes affects students' teaching once they have entered the workforce.

Perceptions Of Education Students

The review of research that focuses on education students' perceptions of gender and education shows, that four tendencies have been identified. Many students react negatively, and resist discussions of gender; they hold strong traditional attitudes of men and women; they believe that gender issues are non-issues and; they feel that survival in their teaching practica is more important than utilizing equitable teaching strategies. These perceptions are not surprising since the literature states that the problemitization of gender in schools and Faculties of Education is left unexamined by teachers, parents and students.

Preservice students often demonstrate vast amounts of resistance to gender equity. When education students react negatively to discussions of gender equity in education (Sikes, 1991; Skelton, & Hanson, 1989) they describe the teacher educators

who attempt to raise such issues as 'man haters' and 'feminists' (Lundeberg, 1997, p. 55). They describe gender equity as being "off putting", as being "pumped down their throats", and label it as being "off putting" (Menter, 1989; Skelton, & Hanson, 1989).

Additionally, prospective teachers often hold strong traditional attitudes of women and men (Bailey, Scantlebury, & Letts IV, 1997, p. 30). Many are not aware that they possess such attitudes. Others acknowledge that such traditional sex role stereotyping exists, but appear happy in the belief that their disagreement with such practices will prevent them from being sexist in their own teaching (Thompson, 1989, p. 72).

Some prospective teachers refuse to believe that schools treat people unfairly because they do not see themselves as having experienced such treatment (Lundeberg, 1997, p. 55). Very few prospective teachers question the gendered nature of schools or the gender bias found in educational curriculum (Avery, & Walker, 1993; Bowles, & Gintis, 1976; Grant, 1981; Liston, & Zeichner, 1990; Whyte, 1983). They tend not to notice subtle systemic inequities in schools, but are more apt to recognize blatant forms of sexism such as sexual harassment (Bailey, Scantlebury, & Letts IV, 1997; Lundeberg, 1997).

Others acknowledge that at one time such gender inequitable experiences were prominent, but claim that times have changed and equity issues have been resolved (Bailey, Scantlebury, & Letts IV, 1997; Scantlebury, 1995). Many prospective teachers believe that child centred learning in primary education and in teacher preparation programs makes gender discrimination a non-issue in primary education (Skelton, 1987, p. 171). Treating gender as a non-issue in primary education, however, actually perpetuates gender discrimination (Skelton, 1989, p. 59). Skelton, & Hanson (1989) argue that discriminatory practices evident in primary classrooms often remain uncontested and are actively reinforced in initial teacher education programs (p. 119).

Preservice students claim that the most important part of their teacher training is the work they carry out in schools during their teaching practica (Crozier, & Menter, 1993; Feinman-Nemser, & Buchmann, 1987; Maher, & Rathbone, 1986; Menter, 1989). For student teachers survival is their top priority in teacher placements, and they are concerned mainly with what to teach and how to teach it (Skelton, 1989; Skelton, & Hanson, 1989). Consequently, many feel that discussion of gender equity in their classes takes away from their time to learn practical things such as classroom management and teaching.

Menter (1989) argues that even if student teachers are interested in using gender equitable teaching strategies, they tend not to do so if their associate teacher does not use such strategies; they are "fearful of rocking the boat" (p. 463). Some students merely emulate the teaching style of their associate teacher because they assume that this is the standard upon which they will evaluated.

Frameworks For Theorizing Gender

The literature that examines gender issues in preservice education does so at the practical component of education - what occurs daily in classrooms. The academic or theoretical works that examine gender in education are often overlooked. Both components of gender issues must be examined simultaneously in an effort to decrease or eliminate the inequities girls/women and boys/men receive in today's classrooms.

Theories and research studies that have examined gender have evolved within several historical frameworks which have generated useful analyses of 'gender' and 'gender relations' each with its own limitations. The predominant frameworks as identified by Connell (1987), are: 'Secular Morality', 'Natural-Difference Theory', 'Sex Role Theory', and 'Post Modernism'.

Connell (1987) identifies 'Secular Morality' as a way of examining gender in which "sex and gender are seen as items in a debate about the moral relationship among men, women and God" (p. 23). During the 'Enlightenment Period', individuals began to question the belief that "God laid down a path for women and men to follow" (p. 24). Theologians and philosophers began to debate the moral status of the subordination of women and examined the lives of people who did not adhere to the prescribed roles of women and men.

New empirical questions emerged: "If the subordination of women was not natural or just, how had it come about? How was it sustained?" (Connell, 1987, p. 25). The 'Natural-Difference' theory attempted to answer these questions and postulated that biology determines gender (p. 67). Thus, the terms 'female' and 'male' were defined as dichotomous biological categories in a specific system of reproduction (p. 66).

The biological account of gender relations has limitations. If one accepts the notion of natural biological sex differences, the "debate on sexual politics ends with the assertion that women and men are different" (Connell, 1987, p. 66). This framework fails to examine or identify how gender operates within a social structure and has failed to explain what caused sex differences.

Scientists examined the limitations of the 'Natural Difference' theory and postulated a theory of 'Biological Reductionism'. Biological reductionism "sees biology not as fixing individual characteristics, but as setting limits within which social arrangements may vary" (Connell, 1987, p. 72). This theory proposes that all societies must produce new members, and must accommodate and sustain the sexual and social relationships that reproduce new members (p. 72). This theory assumes the universality of the nuclear family and argues that a society that wanders beyond these limits will collapse or come under terrible strain (Connell, 1987, p. 72).

Connell (1987) outlines an alternative version of the 'Natural-Difference' theory. This version postulates that biology establishes certain differences between females and males, but this is insufficient for the complexities of social life; therefore, society culturally elaborates the distinction between the sexes (p. 73). An example of this is the differences in the types of toys that boys and girls play with.

This version of the 'Natural Difference' theory has several limitations. It fails to explain what people find central in their experience of sex and gender. Secondly, the weighting of social versus biological determination has not been established. Thirdly,

gender is seen as dichotomous and unchanging (Connell, 1987, p. 75). Lastly, the differences which define 'females' and 'males' are not questioned and these terms are taken as natural categories (p. 76-77).

'Sex Role' theory shifted away from the biological assumptions of sex differences to an explanation based on responses to different social expectations. This framework connects social structure to the formation of personality through socialization (Connell, 1987, p.49). 'Sex Role' theorists assert that 'masculine' and 'feminine' characters are produced by socialization.

Standardized attitude and personality tests were developed to measure masculinity and femininity as a psychological trait. 'Sex Role' theorists believe that there are socially provided scripts for individuals that are learned and then enacted (Connell, 1987, p. 30). Consequently, being a man or a woman means enacting a "general role definitive of one's sex - the 'sex role'" (p. 48). 'Sex Role' theorists assume that there are always two sex roles in a given context, the 'masculine role' and the 'feminine role' (p. 48). Individuals who do not fit into one of the two categories are labeled as deviant and are often subjected to interventions to straighten them out (p. 30). An example of this would be a tomboy.

The 'Sex Role' framework provides a theoretical underpinning for liberal feminism (Connell, 1987, p. 33). Liberal feminists attribute the disadvantages of women to the "stereotyped customary expectation, both held by men and internalized by women" (p. 33-34). These stereotypes are believed to be taught and reinforced by families, schools, peers and other agencies of socialization (p. 34).

Liberal feminists assume that the inequalities faced by women can be eliminated by breaking down these stereotypes (Connell, 1987, p. 34). Consequently, liberal feminists examine the agencies of socialization, how models of femininity and masculinity are conveyed to children, and what happens when the messages are mixed (p. 49).

The 'Sex Role' framework has limitations. The first limitation is its reliance on social determinism; the idea that individuals are trapped in social stereotypes. It assumes that individuals take on sex roles voluntarily (Connell, 1987, p. 50). The second limitation is that this framework continues to rely on a biological dichotomy which suggests that male and female sex roles are equal in stature, but differing in content. There is no recognition of the power relationships between men and women (Connell, 1987, p. 51). Thirdly, the nuclear family is taken as a

normative standard. This theory assumes that most people operate within this standard and consider it the proper way to live; however, it cannot explain why certain individuals resist this normative standard (Connell, 1987, p. 53).

An alternative version of the 'Sex Role' theory moves beyond the concept of 'sex role' and examines the significance of power in gender relations. In 'Sex Role-Power' theory, women and men are seen as being linked by a direct power relationship (Connell, 1987, p. 34). Consequently, theorists examine and attempt to provide definitions for the categories 'women' and 'men'. Theoretical attention is focused on the category into which the individual is inserted (p. 56).

Connell (1987) outlines some of the limitations of this framework. It takes the categories 'women' and 'men' as absolutes, that require no further explanation (p. 57). It stresses conflict of interest, but has difficulty explaining the way interests are constituted (p. 60). Who has power? Who does not have power? Why do certain individuals have power while others do not? Also, it assumes that to decrease or eliminate the inequalities faced by women, an increased number of women should be placed in positions of power (p. 60).

Currently, some feminists are examining gender from a 'Postmodern' framework. Postmodern theorists call for a re-examination of the categories 'male', 'female', 'masculine', and 'feminine'. Postmodernists also examine the consequences of being assigned to one or the other within concrete social practice. Flax (1990) argues that "such meanings and practices will vary by culture, age, class, and race" (p. 46).

Flax (1990) asserts that in attempts to discover a single cause of gender relations, individuals who hold positions of privilege repress the voices of individuals without privilege (p. 48-49). Di Stefano (1990) writes that;

> 'women' do not exist as a sufficiently coherent social subject. If differences between women - differences secured on the basis of race, class, sexuality, culture and ethnicity are sufficient to over-ride feminine commonalities of experience and interests, then a feminist standpoint is a potentially oppressive and totalizing fiction. (p. 74)

Butler (1992) concurs with Di Stefano and argues that the term 'women' must "become a site for permanent openness and resignifiability" (p. 16).

Di Stefano (1990) suggests that postmodernism is skeptical of universal claims about gender; rather, postmodern theorists promote multiple theories of gender, "none of which merit theoretical privilege over others" (p. 75). Fraser, & Nicholson (1990) argue

that a postmodern framework would be comparative rather than universalizing (p. 34). In the political arena, this means that the diversity of women's needs and experiences will be respected and that multiple solutions will be sought to decrease gender inequity (p. 35).

The majority of research that examines gender issues in preservice education utilizes the "Sex Role" theory as a framework for understanding gender and gender relations. An advantage of using this framework is that gender inequalities can be examined from a social, rather than from a biological perspective. Researchers in the area of gender and education can examine how schools socialize students, and how models of masculinity and femininity are conveyed to students in school.

A major disadvantage of the "Sex Role" theory framework is its reliance on the biological dichotomy of 'male' and 'female'. These terms are seen as natural facts and are not subjected to in-depth examination. However, these terms are extremely complex and postmodern theorists are just now starting to re-examine what it means to be a man or a woman. 'Sex Role' theory fails to examine the multi-leveled social context within which gender operates.

A second disadvantage of the "Sex Role" theory framework is the absence of an examination of power relationships.

Consequently, questions such as who decides what will be taught in schools and why certain individuals ideas are seen as being more important in education cannot be examined.

Research that examines gender issues in preservice education is just starting to provide possible explanations for why males and females receive very different educations. Theoretical frameworks for understanding gender are useful when examining what actually occurs in initial teacher education because they allow researchers to explore multiple explanations for gender inequity.

Summary

A consistent pattern emerges when gender is examined in elementary/secondary schools and Faculties of Education. In all three, gender is a major organizing structure. Students enter these institutions with perceived and unexamined notions of what it means to be girls/women and boys/men.

In the elementary schools, the gender role identities that students bring with them to school are often based on gender role stereotyping. Teachers are influenced by such stereotyping and often incorporate it into their teaching practices. Consequently, teachers treat boys and girls differently and have different expectations for them.

Educators and researchers who have identified some of the problems that result from student/teacher interactions have attempted to implement equity interventions to decrease or eliminate such gender bias. These interventions were only partially successful. The literature reports that gender equity interventions have been resisted repeatedly by parents, teachers and students and that gender is not recognized as being important in schools.

When individuals enter teacher education preparation programs, they bring attitudes, beliefs and ideas of what it means to be a women or a man with them. These are often based on gender role stereotyping. The literature that examines gender and education argues that Faculties of Education do not examine gender issues in their teacher preparation programs; thus, instead of changing such attitudes and beliefs, such programs actively perpetuate gender inequality.

The literature reports that even when individual teacher educators do attempt to examine gender issues, they are met with resistance from students, coworkers and from the administration. The problematization of gender continues to be ignored. Therefore, researchers and teacher educators must examine this theme of

resistance in an attempt to answer why individuals do not respond positively to gender equity initiatives.

Examining how gender is constructed in schools from a theoretical perspective may be beneficial. When individuals develop and implement gender equity interventions, they must keep in mind how the individuals that undergo such interventions define and understand gender. Teachers and researchers must begin to examine the resistance to discussion of gender issues so that future interventions can be more affective.

CHAPTER TWO

Methodology

This chapter is an overview of the research methodology including a rationale for the use of focus groups and an acknowledgment of its limitations. It includes a description of the composition of the focus groups and of the procedures that were followed.

Overview Of The Research Methodology

The questions asked in this research study were: "What are preservice teachers' perceptions towards gender issues in education?", and "Are 'gender issues' an integral component of prospective teacher training?" The perceptions toward gender issues of preservice teacher candidates enroled in an one year Bachelor of Education program at a small university in North Western Ontario were examined through a focus group methodology supplemented by "self appraisal" questionnaires adapted from one designed by the Office on the Status of Women, Concordia University (Solar, 1992, p. 21-25).

After completing the pre-intervention "self appraisal" questionnaire, the class viewed the film "Why Schools Fail Girls?" (American Broadcasting Companies Inc., 1994). Then a stratified

sampling was done and 40 preservice students, 20 men and 20 women were invited to participate in focus groups to explore their perceptions about gender issues. A post-intervention "self appraisal" questionnaire was administered to the entire compulsory education class after the focus group sessions to ascertain changes in perceptions.

Rationale For And Limitations Of Focus Groups

Focus group methodology is "invaluable for 'grounded theory development' - focusing on the generation rather than the testing of theory and exploring the categories which the participants use to order their experiences" (Kitzinger, 1994, p. 108).

> When the goals of the research are general, call for qualitative data, require data that is not in the respondent's top of mind, and when there is minimal prior knowledge about a particular problem and the range of responses likely to emerge, the focus group may be the appropriate research design. (Zeller, 1993, p. 1)

The questions asked in this research study required a qualitative approach to data collection. A qualitative approach allows the researcher to examine not only what the participants think, but how they think and why they think as they do (Kitzinger, 1994, p. 104). Krueger (1994) believes that "focus groups allow for group interaction and greater insight into why certain opinions are held" (p. 3).

Focus group methodology has many advantages identified in several sources (Byers, & Wilcox, 1991; Carey, & Smith, 1992; Frey, & Fontana, 1993; Kitzinger, 1994; Krueger, 1993; 1994; Morgan, & Krueger, 1993), but it is important to understand limitations as well. The advantages and limitations of focus group methodology are summarized here.

The Advantages Of Focus Group Methodology

1. *It is Useful for Identifying Hypotheses*

Focus group methodology allows researchers to formulate research questions and hypotheses. Frey, & Fontana (1993) state that focus groups can serve as a testing ground for hypotheses or analytic suggestions (p. 32-33). The focus group method is a "bottom-up" approach with researchers developing concepts, hypotheses, and theoretical propositions from direct experience with the data (Poole, & McPhee, 1985, p. 108).

2. *It Provides Additional Incidental Information*

Focus groups produce information that cannot be obtained from paper and pencil self reports (Byers, & Wilcox, 1991, p. 64). "Every day communication such as anecdotes, jokes or loose word associations may tell us as much or more about what people know" (Kitzinger, 1994, p. 109).

> The nub of qualitative research - and its claim to validity - lies in the intense involvement between researchers and subjects. Because the moderator can challenge and probe for the most truthful responses, supporters claim qualitative research can yield a more in-depth analysis than that produced by formal quantitative methods. (Mariampolski, 1984, p. 21)

Focus groups can also be used to handle contingencies in the data by exploring the linkages that go untouched in a statistical survey (Byers, & Wilcox, 1991, p. 66).

In questionnaires it is easy to assume that the participant is giving the answer for the 'right' reason. Diversity within a focus group forces people to explain the reasoning behind their thinking (Kitzinger, 1994, p. 113). Thus, focus groups can produce information that remains untapped by other methods. Focus group methodology permits researchers to probe "unanticipated issues that [are] not possible within the more structured questioning sequence of questionnaires" (Krueger, 1994, p. 35).

3. *It Provides a Social Perspective*

In a focus group, research data is derived from a social rather than an individual process.

> Evidence from focus group interviews suggests that people do influence each other with their comments, and in the course of discussion the opinions of an individual might shift. The focus analyst can thereby discover more about how that shift occurred and the nature of the influencing factors. (Krueger, 1994, p. 11)

Focus groups involve more than just the collection of data on individuals' feelings and experiences, it involves identifying the factors that influence these feelings and experiences. Focus groups use participant interaction as part of the research data (p. 104).

4. *It Has a High Degree of External and Face Validity*

Focus group methodology is valid if it is used carefully for a topic that is suitable for a focus group inquiry (Krueger, 1994, p. 31). Albrecht, Johnson, & Walther (1993) describe focus methodology as having a high degree of external validity because it is grounded in the human tendency to discuss issues and ideas in groups (p. 54). Borg, Gall, & Gall (1993) define external validity as the degree to which a study's results "can be generalized to persons, settings, and times, different from those involved in the research (p. 303).

> Given that focus groups are social events involving the interaction of participants and the interplay of ideas, such as a forum for opinion gathering may render data that is more ecologically valid than methods that assess individuals' opinions in relatively asocial settings. (Albrecht, Johnson, & Walter, 1993, p. 54)

A second form of validity is what Borg, Gall, & Gall (1993) called "ecological validity". Ecological validity "involves the extent to which the situational conditions that existed during the

experiment affect the generalizability of the experimental results to other situational conditions" (p. 304).

Focus groups are social events that involve communication, discussion and debate among those participating. Krueger (1994) argues that "focus groups have high face validity, which is due in large part to the believability of comments from participants" (p. 32). Krueger (1994) also states that face validity is the most basic level for assessing data, and involves considering whether the results look valid (p. 32).

5. *It Takes Advantage of Group Dynamics*

Focus group methodology takes advantage of group dynamics to produce new and additional data. This methodology "provides insight into the operation of group/social processes in the articulation of knowledge" (Kitzinger, 1994, p. 116). For example, the researcher can examine what information is deemed acceptable, and what information is censured or muted within the group. Focus groups tell us about the social pressures and the construction of knowledge which determines the nature and quality of the data collected (Albrecht, Johnson, & Walther, 1993; Kitzinger, 1994).

The participants in a focus group provide an audience for one another which allows for a greater variety of communication that is often not evident within more traditional methods of data

collection (Kitzinger, 1994, p. 108). The internal, and personal support given by the focus group participants to one another encourages the discussion of sensitive, uncomfortable, and embarrassing subjects (p. 111), thereby allowing the expression of ideas, and experiences that might be left underdeveloped in an interview (p. 116).

Focus group methodology expands the depth and variation in responses or descriptions given by participants, thereby allowing the researcher to learn more about the degree of consensus on the topic being discussed (Frey, & Fontana, 1993; Morgan, & Krueger, 1993). Through detailed attention to the interactions between participants during a focus group session, the researcher can: use conflict between participants to clarify why people believe what they do; get at underlying assumptions and theoretical frameworks held by the participants; explore the arguments people use against one another; and identify the factors which influence individuals to change their minds (Kitzinger, 1994, p. 116). The group dynamics of the focus groups can provide much additional information.

6. *It Shows Respect for the Subjects*

Morgan, & Krueger (1993) suggest the use of focus groups when a friendly research method is required that is respectful and not

condescending to its target audience (p. 18). This helps to decrease the power differential between researcher and participants. Priority is given to the participants' hierarchies of importance, their language, their concepts and frameworks for understanding the world (Kitzinger, 1994, p. 108). The methodology involves a more reciprocal exchange of information by the researcher and the participants.

Focus group methodology can be used to investigate complex behaviours and motivations. It provides insight into participants' underlying attitudes, beliefs, opinions, priorities, language, framework for understanding and behaviour patterns (Byers, & Wilcox, 1991; Carey, & Smith, 1992; Kitzinger, 1994; Krueger, 1994).

The Limitations Of Focus Group Methodology

1. *Lack of Generalizable Conclusions*

The data collected during a focus group session should not be generalized to the larger population from which the participants were sampled because the participants may be more extroverted, outgoing and sociable than the average individual (Byers, & Wilcox, 1991, p. 67). This is especially true of volunteer participants.

This study attempted to eliminate the effect of volunteer participants by conducting a stratified sampling instead of having individuals sign up for the focus group sessions.

2. *Danger of Compliance*

Participants may respond in ways that they believe are expected by the researcher, in anticipation of some immediate reward (Albrecht, Johnson, & Walther, 1993, p. 55). The quality of the data collected is affected when the moderator is too close to the topic and has already narrowed the relevant argument into categories that may be different from those of the focus group participants (Krueger, 1993, p. 74-75). If a moderator is perceived by participants to be holding a particular position on the issues, this may provoke similar or different views from the focus group (p. 75).

3. *Production of Irrelevant Data*

It is possible that focus group sessions will lead to the production of irrelevant data (Frey, & Fontana, 1993, p. 34). This occurs when the focus group participants simply use the sessions to complain and the discussion goes off on tangents. Krueger (1994) states that because participants have tremendous input into the

direction of the focus group discussion;

> the researcher has less control in the group interview as compared to the individual interview. The focus group interview allows the participants to influence and interact with each other, and, as a result group members are able to influence and interact with each other, and as a result group members are able to influence the course of discussion. This sharing of group control results in some inefficiencies such as detours in the discussion, and the raising of irrelevant issues... (p. 36)

Thus, the moderator must keep the discussion on track to produce viable and relevant data.

4. *Danger of Conformity*

Another limitation of the focus group methodology is that participants are subject to conformity, social desirability and could be motivated to provide socially acceptable responses to conform to group norms (Byers, & Wilcox, 1991, p. 67). Members of a focus group influence what is discussed and what is defined as socially acceptable. The moderator of the focus group sessions must consider what information may be censored by a particular group and note that minority voices are often muted by the majority voices in a focus group population (Kitzinger, 1994, p. 110).

Assigning Focus Groups

A population composed of students enroled in a compulsory education class was used to select a stratified sampling of forty preservice students (20 females and 20 males) who were invited to participate in the focus group sessions. The pre-intervention "self appraisal" questionnaire (see Appendix 1) was used to: a) identify a population sample of preservice education students. b) sort the 40 stratified sampled preservice students into focus groups based on their answers to question number one of the pre-intervention "self appraisal" questionnaire, and c) sensitize students to gender issues in the classroom prior to the focus groups. As suggested by Zeller (1993, p. 168), if participants in a focus group have spent some time thinking about the topic to be discussed, the conversation will be more informative and lively (p. 168).

The preservice teachers in the compulsory education class were asked to complete the pre-intervention "self appraisal" questionnaire shortly after the commencement of the school year. Each copy of the pre-intervention "self appraisal" questionnaire was assigned a different number. The students were asked to submit on separate slips of paper, their full names and the numbers that were on their pre-intervention "self appraisal" questionnaires.

The students were told that if they felt uncomfortable submitting their names and numbers they should refrain from doing so. The names and numbers were recorded on a confidential list.

The identification numbers served to identify a stratified sample to participate in the focus groups, "ensuring that individuals in the population who have certain characteristics are represented in the sample" (Borg, Gall, & Gall, 1993, p. 98).

Intervention

The intervention took place in a Faculty of Education that offers a one year consecutive Bachelor of Education program and a four year concurrent Bachelor of Education program. The majority of the education students that participated in the intervention were enrolled in the one year consecutive Bachelor of Education program.

The students enrolled in either program are not required to take a compulsory education course that examines gender issues. Additionally, the Faculty of Education does not offer an elective course that examines gender issues. Whether or not gender issues are raised in the courses offered at this particular Faculty of Education is left to the discretion of the professors conducting the courses.

The specific course in which the intervention took place is a compulsory course that analyses the objectives of Ontario education. The legal, curricular, organizational and the economic factors used to achieve these identified objectives and the extent to which these objectives are achieved are also examined. The professor that was teaching this course set aside a one hour class period for my gender equity intervention. No other class periods were set aside to discuss gender issues.

At the start of the class period, the students were asked to complete a pre-intervention "self appraisal" questionnaire. After the pre-intervention "self appraisal" questionnaires had been completed, the entire compulsory education class viewed the film "Why Schools Fail Girls?" (American Broadcasting Companies Inc., 1994). This film is a video report produced by ABC for Lifetime Magazine that examines gender bias in education.

In the film, Lifetime Magazine visits students and teachers in the Miami Middle School in Fort Wayne, Indiana to observe and to discuss gender inequity in schools. The results of a ten year study conducted by Myra and David Sadker were also outlined and examined.

The objective of the film as outlined by Lifetime Magazine are to have viewers: a) understand how gender discrimination affects

women beginning at a young age; b) contemplate how gender stereotypes affect the education women receive and influence the career paths they ultimately choose; c) learn how educators can be more sensitive to the way they treat all students in the co-educational classroom; and d) see some of the strategies being tested to rectify gender inequality in the classroom.

In this study, the film was intended to sensitize students to gender issues in the classroom. Zeller (1993) advocates the screening of a film prior to focus group sessions because the participants will mull over the issues raised in the film which enhances the conversations in future focus group sessions (p. 169).

The Focus Groups

Krueger (1993) states that the participants in a focus group should represent those you wish to study (p. 71) and states that the participants of a focus group must have certain characteristics in common that relate to the topic of the focus group (1994, p. 6). In this research, the participants were preservice teachers in a one year bachelor of education program.

The focus group sessions were held to explore the diverse perceptions, attitudes and beliefs that preservice students have

towards gender issues in education and to examine the impact that a gender issues component has on a one year bachelor of education program.

Focus Group Composition

A focus group includes 8-10 persons brought to a centralized location to respond to questions on a topic of particular interest to a researcher (Frey, & Fontana, 1993, p. 30). Byers, & Wilcox (1991) suggest that the most productive group size is eight (p. 70). Therefore, ten students were invited to each session to allow for attrition.

Several researchers (Axelrod, 1975; Byers & Wilcox, 1991; Knodel, 1993) advocate homogeneity within focus groups in relation to the topic under discussion. Homogenous groups produce greater in-depth information than would be the case with heterogenous groups because it is easier for participants sharing similar characteristics to identify with one another's experiences (Knodel, 1993, p. 40). Also, the literature suggests that individuals are more willing to share when the focus groups are strictly homogenous which results in more in-depth discussion amongst group members (Krueger, 1993, p. 70).

To ensure homogeneity in each focus group, the 40 preservice students selected by the stratified sampling were placed in one of

four groups based upon their answers to question one on the pre-intervention "self appraisal" questionnaire. Individuals who agreed with the statement that males and females are treated equally in the classroom environment were placed in one group and those that disagreed with this statement were placed in another group. The remaining groups were a mixture of the remaining students. Due to scheduling complications, five focus groups sessions were held instead of four so 3 groups were heterogenous.

The Focus Group Sessions

One focus group session was held with each of the five groups. Each session was approximately an hour in length. I was the moderator and had the help of a volunteer who had previous experience as an assistant moderator.

The same moderator and assistant moderator were used for all five focus groups to enhance reliability (Albrecht, Johnson, & Walther, 1993, p. 30). Only one focus group session was held per day to prevent moderator fatigue which Krueger (1993) suggests threatens the quality of the information collected (p. 81). All of the sessions were audio-taped and aliases were used by the participants.

"Participant anonymity and confidentiality must be maintained to ensure that the information collected in the focus group

sessions are credible" (Carey, & Smith, 1992, p. 112). This was done through the use of aliases during the focus group sessions. The focus group participants were asked to select their own aliases for use during the sessions, in field notes and in the reporting of the data. No record of the real names associated with the aliases was made; therefore, what was said during the focus group session cannot be associated with a particular individual.

"Confidentiality must be ensured by both the researcher and by the participants" (Morgan, & Krueger, 1993, p. 12). Participants might have recognized other focus group participants from their education classes; therefore, I asked the participants not to discuss what was said during the focus group sessions with individuals outside the focus group.

"To ensure successful data collection in focus group sessions, the atmosphere in the sessions must be appropriate; The physical location of the focus groups must be neutral, easy to find and create a comfortable and relaxed atmosphere" (Krueger, 1993, p. 68). A relaxed atmosphere invites honesty and open dialogue amongst focus group participants (Axelrod, 1975; Byers, & Wilcox, 1991; Kitzinger, 1994). Such an atmosphere increases trust amongst participants, which in turn increases group participation and discussion. In each focus group session I attempted to produce

such an atmosphere. Krueger (1994) states that "eating together tends to promote conversation and communication within [a] group" (p. 109) so food and beverages were provided.

The guiding questions.

I followed an unstructured interview guide and sought to obtain from the participants their own perceptions as suggested by Axelrod (1975), and Byers, & Wilcox (1991). Knodel (1993) and Krueger (1993) stress the importance of open ended and nondirective questions because the prime aim is not to reach a consensus on a topic, but to explore the diverse experiences, opinions, attitudes, beliefs and perceptions of the participants. Open ended questions enable participants "to choose the manner in which they respond" (Krueger, 1994, p. 19). Ten to twelve well developed questions are adequate for a two hour focus group (Krueger, 1993, p. 76). The question guideline used can be found in Appendix B.

The role of the moderator.

The role of the moderator is to keep the participants focused on the topic being discussed (Axelrod, 1975; Byers, & Wilcox ,1991; Frey, & Fontana, 1993; Krueger, 1994). The moderator attempted to maximize interaction among participants as suggested by Kitzinger (1994). This was done by: a) urging debates to continue beyond the stages where they may have otherwise ended, b) challenging people's

taken-for-granted reality and, c) encouraging them to discuss the inconsistencies both between participants and within their own thinking (p. 106). Another role of the moderator is to create "a permissive environment in the focus group that nurtures different perceptions and points of view, without pressuring participants to vote, plan, or reach a consensus" (Krueger, 1994, p. 6).

Several researchers have identified the threat of moderator bias to the validity and reliability of the data collected during focus group sessions (Albrecht, Johnson, & Walther, 1993; Frey, & Fontana, 1993). Moderator bias occurs when the moderator becomes too involved in the interview and offers explanations on her or his own point of view (Frey, & Fontana, 1993, p. 34). Byers, & Wilcox (1991) suggest that the moderator refrain from contributing to the discussion in order to decrease moderator bias (p. 66). The goal of the moderator "is to ask 'why' rather than 'how many', to generate hypotheses rather than assert their representativeness" (p. 69). Data that is free of moderator bias is more reliable and valid. Thus, I refrained from participating in the focus group discussions.

The role of the assistant moderator.

Krueger (1993) advocates the use of an assistant moderator because the moderator is extremely busy during the focus group

discussion (p. 78). An assistant moderator "takes comprehensive notes, operates the tape recorder, handles the environment conditions and logistics (refreshments, lighting seating etc.) and responds to unexpected interruptions" (Krueger, 1994, p. 104). Field notes were taken by the assistant moderator during the focus group sessions and the participants' body language was noted. Field notes provided an additional source of data and were used to cross reference the audio-tape.

Post Intervention "Self Appraisal" Questionnaire

Once the focus group sessions were completed, a post-intervention "self appraisal" questionnaire identical to the pre-intervention "self appraisal" questionnaire was administered to the entire compulsory education class. Each copy of the post-intervention "self appraisal" questionnaire was assigned a number and the same techniques to provide anonymity in the pre-questionnaire were used. Those individuals whose names were recorded on the pre-intervention "self appraisal" questionnaire confidential list and the post-intervention "self appraisal" questionnaire confidential list were identified and their questionnaires were examined to see if there were any changes in their responses.

Data Analysis

The audio tape recordings of the focus groups were transcribed for use in the analyses of the data. A thorough analyses involved the repeated examination of the full set of transcripts as recommended by Knodel (1993, p. 44). Krueger (1994) emphasizes that when analyzing focus group transcripts the researcher must keep in mind that the data was collected in a social environment and, that comments must be interpreted within that context (p. 36).

In this study, the transcripts, assistant moderator notes, and the moderator's reflection notes were included in the analyses of the data. There were four separate focus group transcripts (one was lost due to audio tape recorder failure), five sets of assistant moderator notes, and five sets of moderator reflection notes.

Data analysis involved coding the data into units that identified patterns, regularities and topics using the following procedure summarized from Bogdan, & Biklen (1982): a) Go through the transcript and number the pages. b) Read over the transcript twice. c) Develop a preliminary list of coding categories while reading and assign them abbreviations or numbers. d) Reread the data and assign category codes to the units of data. e) Play with coding possibilities, and draw up a new list and test them. f)

Decide upon the major codes and read the materials within these codes and decide if the information can be further broken down into sub-codes. g) Redo your code list and reassign numbers and abbreviations. h) Reread the data and mark each unit with the appropriate code, be sure to place the page number beside the code and circle it. i) Make several copies of the original transcript and put the original away as a master (p. 176-177).

Data analysis also involves determining the criteria for organizing the textual data into analytically useful subdivisions and the searching for patterns within and between the subdivisions to draw substantively meaningful conclusions (Knodel, 1993, p. 44-45). Bogdan, & Biklen (1982) advocate the use of the "Cut Up and Put in Folder Approach" when organizing the units of data to extract meaningful information (p. 177). This approach was used here. Coded transcript were checked to ensure that each coded unit of data had the page number circled beside it, then several photocopies of the transcript were made because some units of data might have more than one code. The folders were then labeled with the coding categories ensuring that each folder had only one code. Then the notes were cut up and sorted into the appropriate folders. The data in each folder was examined individually to see if some of the data could be further divided into subcategories. Finally the

researcher briefly wrote about the contents of each folder (Bogdan, & Biklen, 1982, p. 177-179). These folders represent the themes, topics and patterns of behaviours that had been collected during the focus group sessions.

Knodel (1993) suggests that researchers using focus group methodology should compare and contrast different focus group sessions (p. 149). I examined the themes that arose from each focus group session and made intergroup comparisons which enabled me to make contrasts between focus groups held with differently defined subsets of participants. Some themes arose in all five focus group sessions, but each session had a unique perspective of gender and education.

CHAPTER THREE

Findings

This chapter includes brief descriptions of each focus group session. The descriptions identify the participants, describe the atmosphere of each session, provide a brief summary of what was discussed, and outline the interaction patterns amongst participants. But first, I examine the findings of the Pre and Post Intervention "Self Appraisal Questionnaire".

Questionnaire Findings

The teacher education class had opportunity to fill out a pre and post "self appraisal" questionnaire and were identified only if they chose to indicate their questionnaire numbers on separate slips of paper. Twenty nine preservice teachers (17 females and 12 males) submitted their names and numbers for both questionnaires. I was able to match 29 sets of pre- and post- responses. The pre and post intervention "self appraisal" questionnaires were identical and consisted of 15 statements that the preservice education students were asked to agree or disagree with. The statements on the questionnaire were as follows:

1. In general, males and females are treated equally in the classroom environment.

2. Females speak up in class more often than males do.
3. Teachers give male and female students different feedback.
4. Most educators include female related issues in their classroom.
5. Sexist stereotyping concerning females' academic performances are still prevalent in the classroom.
6. The classroom climate may affect how female students view themselves.
7. Only male educators display discriminatory behaviour in the classroom.
8. Nowadays, educators are informed about discrimination against females.
9. Most teacher-training programs deal with the issue of inequity in the classroom.
10. What is taught in the classroom is what will be reflected in the labour force.
11. Females have the same intellectual capacities as males.
12. Science is gender neutral.
13. Female role models are seen frequently in textbooks and other resource materials.
14. The language used in the classroom and in textbooks is gender neutral.

15. Children should be prepared for a career suited to their gender.

The pre and post questionnaire responses are as shown in Table 1. Thirteen of the 29 participated in a focus group session (9 females and 4 males). The changes in the responses were as shown in Table 2. Three trends can be extracted from this table.

1. Changes in response to the perception of who speaks most often in class. For question number two which read, "Females speak up in class more often than males do", four females (one of whom was a focus group participant) changed their initial response of agree to disagree. Three males made the same change. These changes might have been a result of increased student awareness of teacher/student interaction patterns as teacher/student interactions patterns were discussed in their class and viewed in the film.
2. Changes in assumption that language and textbooks are gender neutral. Table 2 shows that for question number 14 which read; "The language used in the classroom and textbooks is gender neutral", four females (three of whom were focus group participants) changed their initial response of agree to disagree. Six of the seven males that initially agreed, disagreed on the post questionnaire. One of the six was a

Table 1

Pre and post questionnaire results

	Pre-Questionaire							Post-Questionaire						
Question #	Agree		Disagree		No Answer		Total	Agree		Disagree		No Answer		Total
	F	M	F	M	F	M		F	M	F	M	F	M	
1	$6_{(3)}$	$9_{(3)}$	$11_{(6)}$	$2_{(1)}$		1	$29_{(13)}$	$5_{(3)}$	$7_{(3)}$	$12_{(6)}$	$5_{(1)}$			$29_{(13)}$
2	$4_{(1)}$	3	$13_{(8)}$	$8_{(4)}$		1	$29_{(13)}$		1	$16_{(9)}$	$11_{(4)}$	1		$29_{(13)}$
3	$10_{(8)}$	$4_{(2)}$	$6_{(1)}$	$7_{(2)}$	1	1	$29_{(13)}$	$14_{(8)}$	$6_{(2)}$	$3_{(1)}$	$6_{(2)}$			$29_{(13)}$
4	$5_{(4)}$	$5_{(2)}$	$10_{(5)}$	$5_{(2)}$	2	2	$29_{(13)}$	$3_{(1)}$	$5_{(2)}$	$14_{(8)}$	$6_{(2)}$		1	$29_{(13)}$
5	$10_{(6)}$	$4_{(2)}$	$6_{(2)}$	$7_{(2)}$	1(1)	1	$29_{(13)}$	$13_{(8)}$	$9_{(3)}$	$4_{(1)}$	$2_{(1)}$		1	$29_{(13)}$
6	$17_{(9)}$	$9_{(4)}$		2		1	$29_{(13)}$	$16_{(9)}$	$12_{(4)}$	1				$29_{(13)}$
7	1		$15_{(9)}$	$12_{(4)}$	1		$29_{(13)}$			$17_{(9)}$	$12_{(4)}$			$29_{(13)}$
8	$16_{(8)}$	$11_{(4)}$	$1_{(1)}$			1	$29_{(13)}$	$14_{(7)}$	$10_{(4)}$	$3_{(2)}$	2			$29_{(13)}$
9	$9_{(5)}$	$5_{(2)}$	$6_{(4)}$	4	$3_{(1)}$	$2_{(1)}$	$29_{(13)}$	$9_{(5)}$	$5_{(4)}$	$8_{(4)}$	6		1	$29_{(13)}$
10	$8_{(5)}$	$11_{(3)}$	$8_{(4)}$	$1_{(1)}$	1		$29_{(13)}$	$5_{(3)}$	$4_{(1)}$	$12_{(6)}$	$8_{(3)}$			$29_{(13)}$
11	$15_{(8)}$	$10_{(3)}$	$2_{(1)}$	$2_{(1)}$			$29_{(13)}$	$17_{(9)}$	$12_{(4)}$					$29_{(13)}$
12	$14_{(8)}$	$8_{(3)}$	$3_{(1)}$	$4_{(1)}$			$29_{(13)}$	$12_{(6)}$	$9_{(3)}$	$5_{(3)}$	$3_{(1)}$			$29_{(13)}$
13	3	$1_{(1)}$	$14_{(9)}$	$10_{(2)}$		$1_{(1)}$	$29_{(13)}$	$5_{(2)}$	$3_{(2)}$	$12_{(7)}$	$9_{(2)}$			$29_{(13)}$
14	$4_{(3)}$	$7_{(1)}$	$12_{(6)}$	$5_{(3)}$	1		$29_{(13)}$	3	$2_{(1)}$	$14_{(9)}$	$9_{(3)}$		1	$29_{(13)}$
15			$17_{(9)}$	$12_{(4)}$			$29_{(13)}$		1	$17_{(9)}$	$11_{(4)}$			$29_{(13)}$

Note. F=female, n=17

M=male, n=12

Bracketed subscripts (ie. X(n)) indicate the number of focus group participants

Table 2

Changes in response from pre-questionnaire to post questionnaire

From:	Agree		Agree		Disagree		Disagree		No Answer		No Answer		No Change		Total
To:	Disagree		No Answer		Agree		No answer		Agree		Disagree				
Question #	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	M&F
1	$4_{(2)}$	2			$3_{(2)}$							1	$10_{(5)}$	$9_{(4)}$	$29_{(13)}$
2	$4_{(1)}$	3				1	1					1	$12_{(8)}$	$7_{(4)}$	$29_{(13)}$
3	$1_{(1)}$	$1_{(1)}$			$4_{(1)}$	$2_{(1)}$			1	1			$11_{(7)}$	$8_{(2)}$	$29_{(13)}$
4	$4_{(3)}$	2			2	2			1		1	1	$9_{(6)}$	$7_{(4)}$	$29_{(13)}$
5					$2_{(1)}$	$5_{(1)}$			$1_{(1)}$				$14_{(7)}$	$7_{(3)}$	$29_{(13)}$
6	1					2				1			$16_{(9)}$	$9_{(4)}$	$29_{(13)}$
7	1										1		$15_{(9)}$	$12_{(4)}$	$29_{(13)}$
8	$2_{(1)}$	2								2			$15_{(8)}$	$9_{(4)}$	$29_{(13)}$
9	$2_{(1)}$	2		1	$3_{(2)}$	1				1	$3_{(1)}$	1	$9_{(5)}$	$6_{(3)}$	$29_{(13)}$
10	$4_{(2)}$	$7_{(2)}$			1						1		$11_{(7)}$	$5_{(2)}$	$29_{(13)}$
11					$2_{(1)}$	$2_{(1)}$							$15_{(8)}$	$10_{(3)}$	$29_{(13)}$
12	$3_{(2)}$	$2_{(1)}$			1	$3_{(1)}$							$13_{(7)}$	$7_{(2)}$	$29_{(13)}$
13	1				$3_{(2)}$	1				$1_{(1)}$			$13_{(7)}$	$10_{(3)}$	$29_{(13)}$
14	$3_{(3)}$	$6_{(1)}$			1	$1_{(1)}$		1	1				$12_{(6)}$	$4_{(2)}$	$29_{(13)}$
15						1							$17_{(9)}$	$11_{(4)}$	$29_{(13)}$

Note. F=female, n=17
M=male, n=12
Bracketed subscripts (ie. X(n)) indicate the number of focus group participants

focus group participant. These changes in response may be a result of an in-class discussion of this topic. The opportunity to participate in a focus group session may have also led to altered responses as this issue was raised and discussed in all of the focus group sessions.

3. Changes in perceptions of gendered intellectual capacities. Table 2 shows that for question number 11 which read, "Females have the same intellectual capacities as males"; everyone agreed with this statement except for two males, and two females. One of these males and one of these females were focus group participants. Table 2 indicates that on the post-questionnaire everyone agreed with this statement so these four students changed their minds. This was the only statement to which all 29 students gave the same response.

Description Of The Focus Group Sessions

Each focus group session was held at the Faculty of Education and was approximately one hour in length. Participant seating was not prearranged; participants selected where they wished to sit.

There were similarities and differences between and among focus groups in terms of interaction patterns. I identified two types of interaction patterns and will refer to them as participant/moderator interaction, and participant/participant

interaction, to distinguish between things being said under my influence and those being said in response to other focus group participants.

Participants initiated interactions with me to seek clarification of questions or to receive confirmation that what they had said made sense. I initiated interactions to probe responses and to encourage individuals to expand on what they had shared. Interaction among participants involved the expression of differences in opinions or support for what an individual had said.

The interaction pattern for each focus group session varied. Participants interacted with me or with one another more in some sessions than in others. In some sessions, the participants did not interact with me or with the other focus group participants. They simply told their stories to the group.

Focus Group # 1 *(5 females, and 5 males signed up)*

(4 females, and 1 male participated)

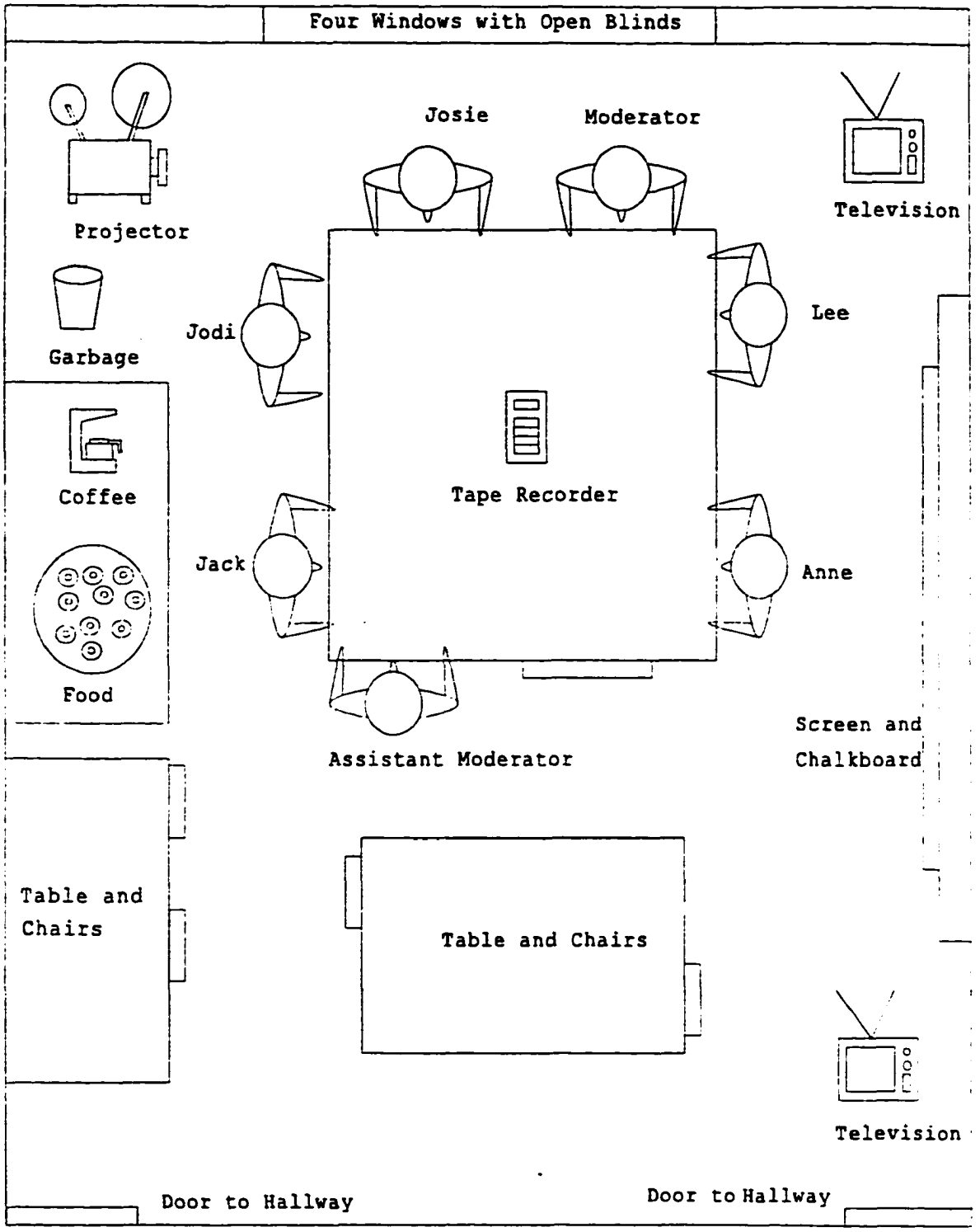
Focus group # 1 was a homogenous group of individuals chosen because they agreed that *"In general, males and females are treated equally in the classroom environment"*. In their discussion; however, they actually disagreed with, or did not totally agree with, the statement.

The atmosphere in the room appeared to be very relaxed and the participants seemed to be very comfortable speaking with one another (Moderator Notes Focus Group Session # 1, p. 1). With only five participants, each individual had an opportunity to speak and the smaller group size appeared to put the participants at ease; this was conducive to discussion (p. 1). All five participants commented at the end that they had enjoyed the session and that they would have liked to have had more time (p. 2).

Several issues were discussed: a) sexual harassment, b) teacher and student interaction patterns, c) teaching strategies, d) learning styles for males and females, e) gender socialization, and f) gender joking.

Group interactions were analysed using the diagram in Figure 1. The male participant known as Jack spoke the most(Interaction Notes Focus Group # 1, p. 2) and always raised his hand to speak (Assistant Moderator Notes Focus Group # 1, p. 5). Jack and Lee interacted the most with me. They often sought clarification to questions and asked me to provide specific examples.

Josie and Jodie interacted very little with me or with the other participants directly; however, they did provide the group with several personal anecdotes, experiences and opinions. Jack and Anne interacted the most with the other participants



Note: Not to scale.

Figure 1. Focus group #1 seating plan and room layout (Assistant Moderator Notes Focus Group #1, p.1).

(Interaction Notes Focus Group # 1, p. 4). Twice, when two people started to speak at the same time, Anne allowed others to speak ahead of her (Assistant Moderator Notes Focus Group # 1, p. 5).

Focus Group # 2 *(3 females, and 2 males signed up)*

(3 females, and 1 male participated)

Focus group # 2 was a homogenous group in that all of the individuals were chosen because they disagreed with the statement that *"In general, males and females are treated equally in the classroom environment"*. All participants maintained that they disagreed with this statement throughout the entire focus group session.

The atmosphere in the room appeared to be comfortable (Moderator Notes Focus Group # 2, p. 1). The participants appeared to be at ease with one another; conversed openly, and dialogued well with one another (p. 1). Two of the individuals indicated that they had attended the same university and four out of five students identified themselves as language majors (p. 1). The male in this session indicated that he was very comfortable amidst an all female group as throughout his post-secondary education, he was often the only male or one of two males in his classes (p. 1). As with focus Group # 1, members of this group commented that they would have liked more time for discussion (p. 1).

Several issues were discussed at this session: a) male and female opportunities in sports and physical education, b) sexual harassment, c) language and the perception that females are better suited to language study, d) socialization of males and females, e) same sex peer pressure, and f) the seriousness of issues.

Group interactions were analysed using the diagram in Figure 2. Two people, Taylor and Alexis, spoke more than the other participants and both stated that they were vocal by nature (Moderator Notes Focus Group # 2, p. 1). Rob and Alexis interacted the most with me, followed by Taylor (Interaction Notes Focus Group # 2, p. 3). Katharine did not interact with me and spoke the least of the four (p. 2).

A triad formed among Rob, Taylor, and Alexis. They expressed their ideas, opinions, and experiences with one another, supported each other, and questioned one another on what had been said. Katharine interacted only with Taylor, often agreeing with or confirming what she had said.

Focus Group # 3 *(5 females, and 2 males signed up)*

(5 females, and 0 males participated)

Focus group # 3 was a heterogenous group who may have either disagreed or agreed with the statement *"In general, males and females are treated equally in the classroom environment"*. This

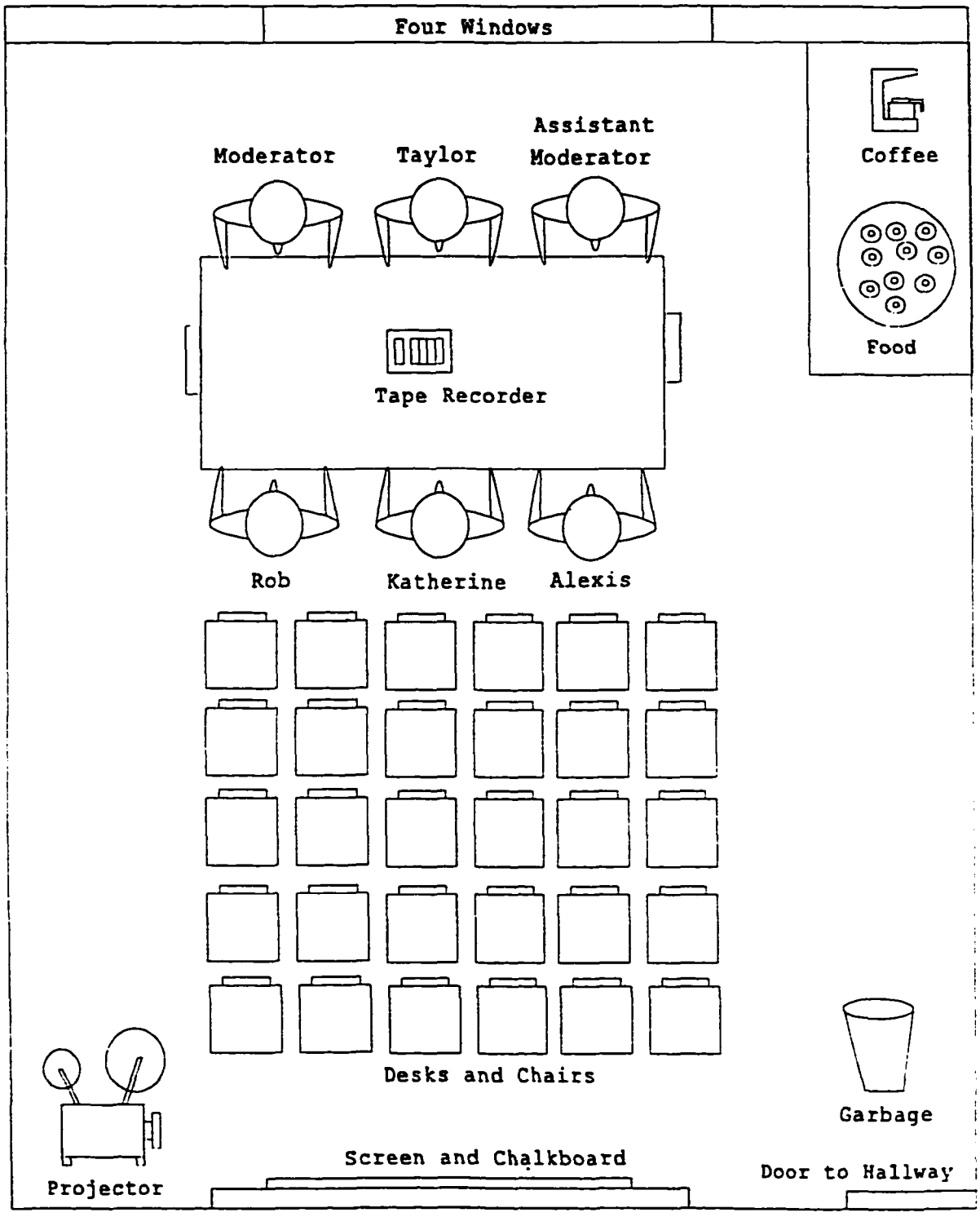


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Figure 2. Focus group #2 seating plan and room layout (Assistant Moderator Notes Focus Group #2, p.1).

group on a whole seemed to disagree with the statement throughout the entire focus group session.

The atmosphere in the room appeared to be very comfortable and agreeable (Assistant Moderator Notes Focus Group # 3, p. 3). Group members listened attentively and encouraged one another to speak (p. 1). Individuals appeared to be very open to the discussion of personal negative experiences that occurred in their secondary and post-secondary educations (p. 1). One female indicated that she had attended an all girls' secondary school (p. 1).

Several issues were discussed: a) gender issues in science education, b) the role of females and males in sports and physical education, c) the role of the family in the gender socialization of children, d) advantages of single sex schooling, and e) disadvantages of single sex schooling.

The seating plan used to analyse the interaction is shown in Figure 3. In this session no particular individual appeared to speak more than others. The group monitored their own participation; they listened to one another attentively and encouraged everyone to speak. Tina and Kate interacted the most with me, but this was done to clarify questions. There was less interaction among the participants themselves. Each group member

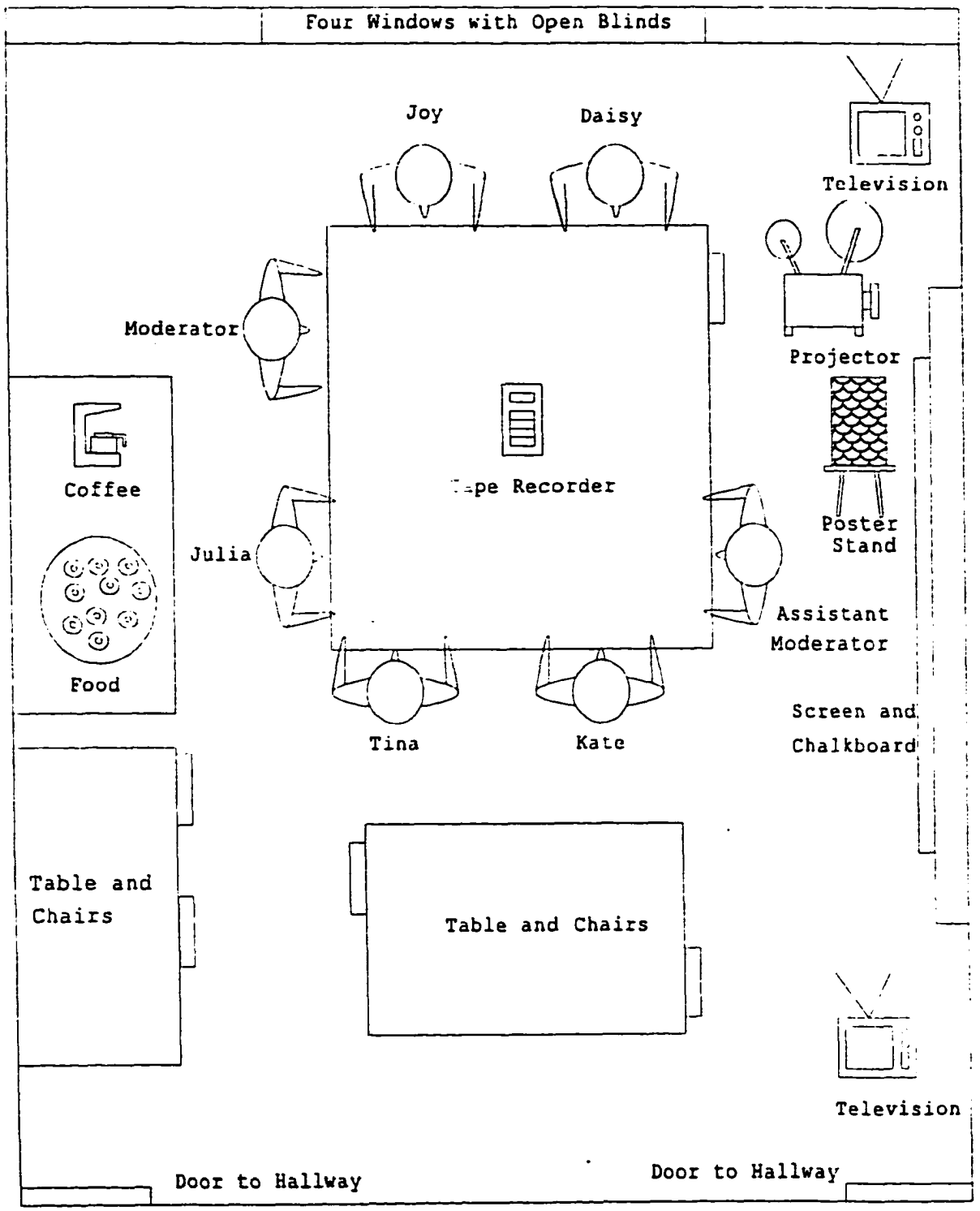

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Figure 3. Focus group #3 seating plan and room layout (Assistant Moderator Notes Focus Group #3, p.1).

tended to express opinions, attitudes and ideas individually.

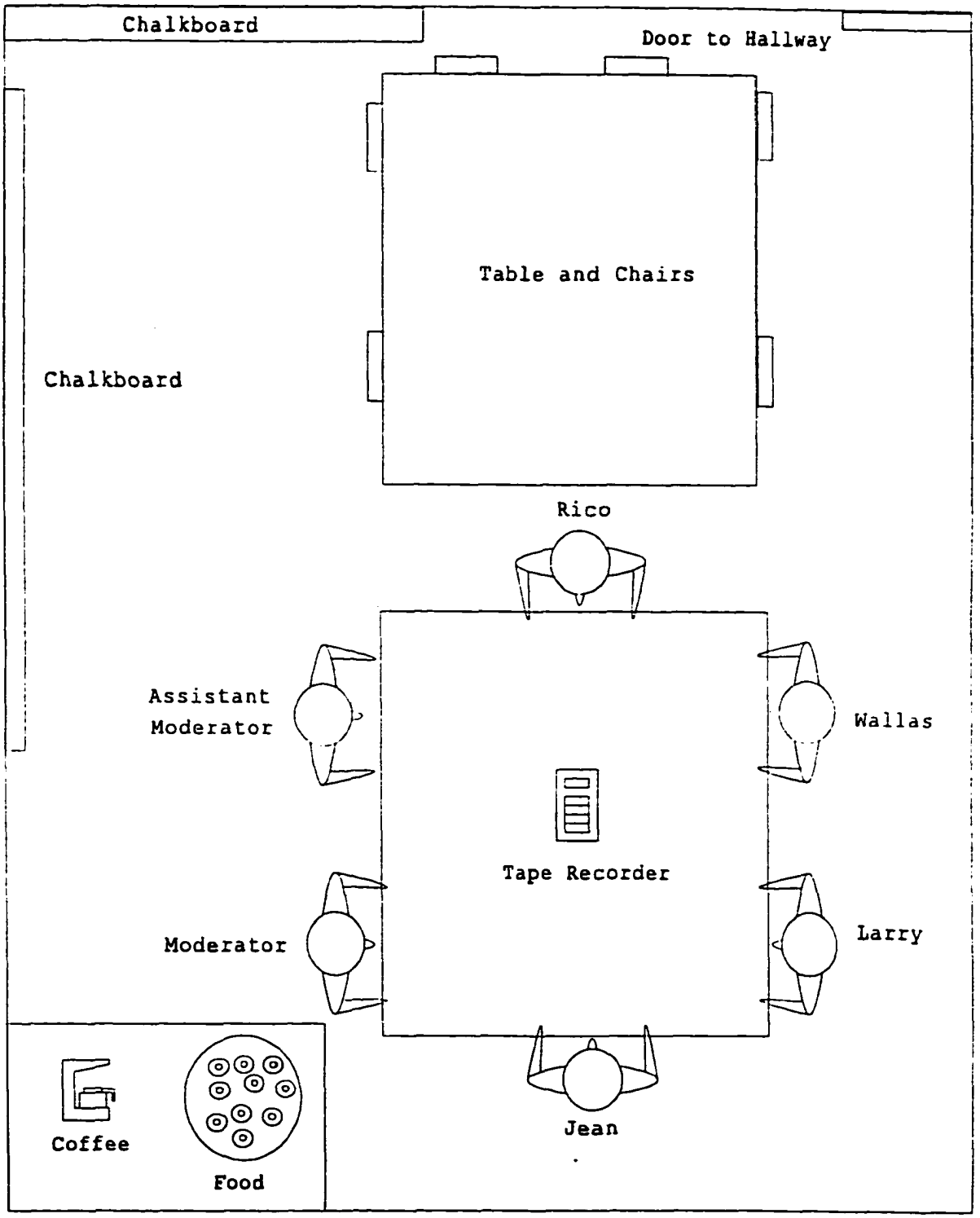
Focus Group # 4 *(4 males signed up)*

(4 males participated)

The participants of focus group # 4 either agreed or disagreed with the statement; *"In general, males and females are treated equally in the classroom environment"*. In the focus group session; however, these four males tended to disagree with the statement. The seating plan was as shown in Figure 4.

The atmosphere in the room appeared to be comfortable. The four males appeared to be at ease with one another (Moderator Notes Focus Group # 4, p. 1), and appeared to agree and disagree quite easily with one another (Assistant Moderator Notes Focus Group # 4, p. 2). Upon the completion of the session, one of the participants known as Larry commented that he would have liked to have had more time to talk (p. 2). All four agreed that if a female had been present, what was said would have changed (p. 2).

Several issues were discussed: a) sexual harassment, b) what it meant to be a radical feminist, c) what it meant to be a non-traditional male and d) how gender was an influence in their family life.



Note: Not to scale.

Figure 4. Focus group #4 seating plan and room layout (Assistant Moderator Notes Focus Group #4, p.1).

Focus Group # 5 *(5 females and 6 males signed up)*

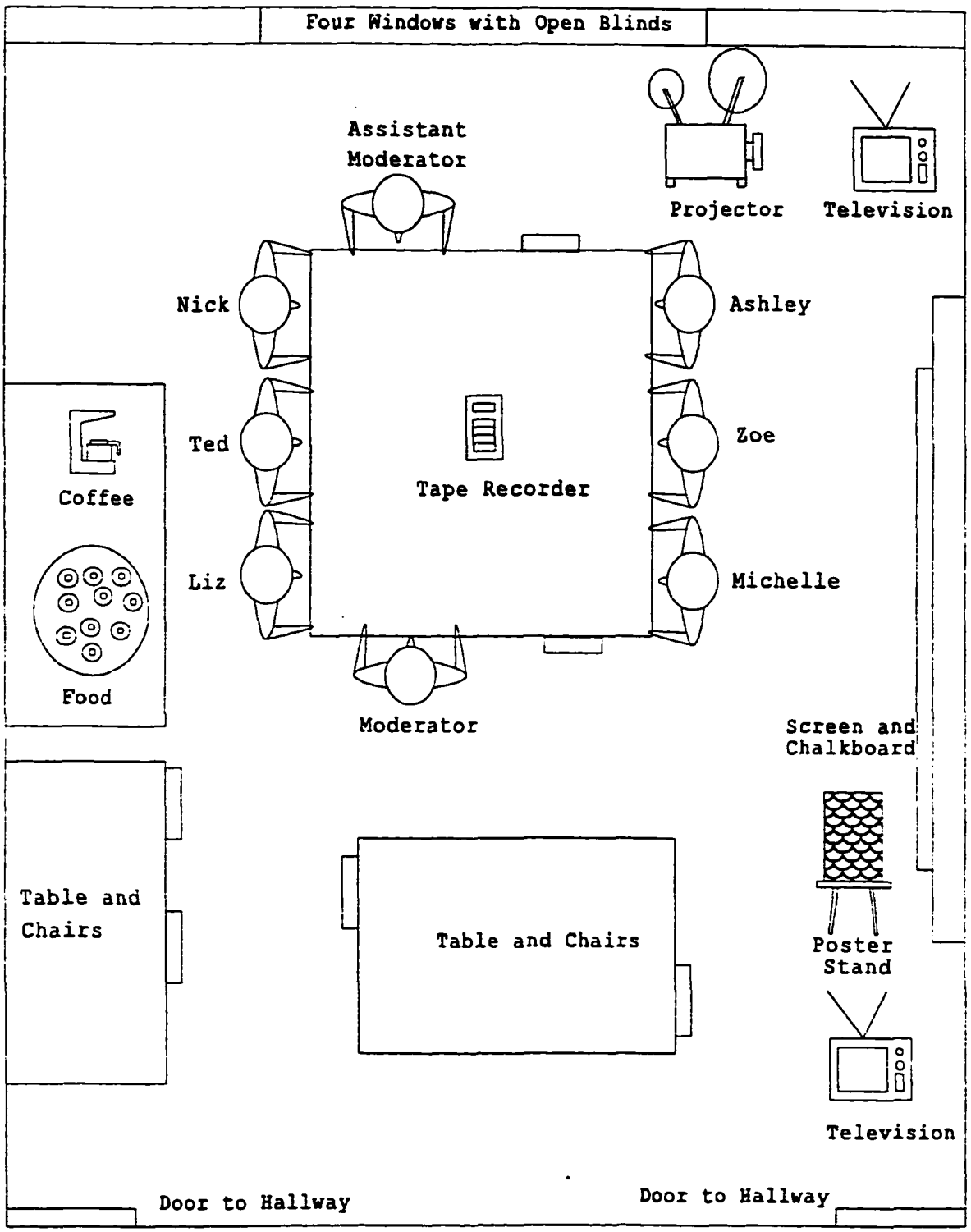
(4 females and 2 males participated)

Focus group # 5 was a heterogenous group in that the participants either disagreed or agreed with the statement; *"In general, males and females are treated equally in the classroom environment"*. The participants continued to agree with the statement throughout the focus group session. The seating plan was as shown in Figure 5.

The make up of this group differed from the other four groups in that for two thirds of the session there were only four female participants. Two males joined the group for the last third of the session, and one female (Liz) departed from the group two thirds of the way through.

The atmosphere was not as comfortable as it had been in the other four sessions (Moderator Notes Focus Group # 5, p. 1). There was a little bit more antagonism (Assistant Moderator Notes Focus Group # 5, p. 2) and unease (Moderator Notes Focus Group # 5, p. 1). Their responses were brief and they did not appear to explore one another's comments (p. 1).

Several issues were raised: a) employment equity, b) teacher/student interaction, c) need for male primary teachers, d) inclusive language, e) experiences of being a female teacher in a



Note: Not to scale.

Figure 5. Focus group #5 seating plan and room layout (Assistant Moderator Notes Focus Group #5, p.1).

traditionally male subject, and f) treatment of teachers by students based upon the gender of the teacher.

For the first two thirds of the session, "Zoe" was the most outspoken. She spoke often and for fairly lengthy periods of time. An interaction triad emerged that included Ashley, Zoe, and Michelle (Interaction Noted Focus Group # 5, p. 4). Liz rarely interacted with the other participants. The participants interacted with me less than the people in the first four sessions.

For the last 1/3 of the session after Liz had left, Ted and Nick dominated the discussion. Zoe and Michelle continued to share; however, Ashley did not participate as much as she had in the first 2/3 of the session (Interaction Notes Focus Group # 5, p. 6). Of the female participants, Zoe spoke the most and interacted the most with Ted and Nick (Interaction Notes Focus group # 5, p. 6, & p. 8).

CHAPTER FOUR

Data Discussion

Four dominant themes that emerged from the data are presented in this chapter. The themes are:

1. Perceptions of Preservice Education Students
2. Issues in the Treatment of Female Students in Education
3. Preservice Students' Experiences in Teacher Education
4. Perceived Expectations of Male and Female Teachers

Several sub-themes were also identified and will be discussed here.

Perceptions Of Preservice Education Students

Some sub-themes that emerged from the focus group data were: women as nurturers; changing times and improvements for women; highschool students' awareness of gender inequity; and preservice students' awareness and understanding of gender inequity. Each of these sub-themes will be discussed in further detail in this section.

1. ***Women as Nurturers***

The traditional role of "nurturer" filled by women and "aggressor", filled by men, in society, was discussed by focus group participants. One female participant disagreed with the

biological explanation for such roles and said that these were not innate characteristics: "Girls are socialized to be more nurturing, more emotional, and more verbal, as boys are socialized to be more logical, more physical" (Focus Group # 1 Transcript, p. 4).

Several individuals described the defined gender/sex roles in their families. One female provided an example. Her father attended all the sporting events; her mother baked for these events and attended the Fun Fairs (white elephant tables) at her school (Focus group # 1 Transcript, p. 24).

Another female within the same focus group linked some of these traditional roles within her family to describe how they affected her teaching.

> I think I'll struggle as a teacher with maintaining equity, gender equity. At home my mother, she is a teacher as well, encouraged me to be independent and very strong willed. But at the same time she used to treat my brother and I very differently and she still does... the way I was socialized, I am independent, but I know that there are still these traditional roles that are filled by men and women. And that really bothers me! In a classroom, I hope I don't still have those traditional roles in mind; women as nurturers and boys as aggressors. These stereotypes are so ingrained that I will always struggle with it ... I hope as a teacher I don't carry that with me. I don't think I will, but that's something we [teachers] have to be conscious of. (Focus Group # 1 Transcript, p. 26)

It was apparent to me that the education students in this study could identify traditional gender/sex roles; however, it was not apparent to me, except for the female cited above, that they made the connection to how these traditional roles affect their teaching.

2. ***Changing Times and Improvements for Women***

Several participants indicated that they felt that times had changed and things were improving for women in society. A male participant commented: "It's an equal, it's an equitable society" (Focus Group # 5 Transcript, p. 27). Other students cautioned that there is still room for improvement. One female declared: "Career and gender expectations have changed, but the female student is still found to be following set gender roles" (Pre/Post-Intervention "Self Appraisal" Questionnaire Notes, p. 2).

Several argued that educators were now more aware of gender issues, and were responding to the needs of females and males in their classrooms. A female student wrote: "Things are changing as educators become more aware" (Pre/Post-Intervention "Self Appraisal" Questionnaire Notes, p. 3). Another female exclaimed; "I would say more often than not teachers are trying to change their ways of responding to kids, whether they're boys or girls" (Focus Group # 1 Transcript, p. 6). Another female student stated:

"The problem of inequity is recognized more and more, but even those teachers who try to be aware fall into bad habits. In my experience the inequity has been very subtle" (Pre/Post-Intervention "Self Appraisal" Questionnaire Notes, p. 3).

Some students suggested that younger teachers are more aware of gender inequity and are eliminating gender differences in teacher/student interactions (Focus Group # 5 Transcript, p. 3). Other students suggested that the educational levels of teachers automatically made them aware of gender bias, and gender stereotyping. A female wrote: "Maybe I'm naive, but I would like to think that teachers are educated enough not to bring gender biases into the classroom" (Pre/Post Intervention "Self Appraisal" Questionnaire Notes, p. 3). The assumption might have been that at some point in a teacher's academic career he/she will be asked to identify and reflect on gender stereotyping and bias, and that awareness prevents gender inequity.

3. ***Highschool Students' Awareness of Gender Inequity***

Several of the focus group participants indicated that they believed that highschool students are not aware of gender inequity. There was some discussion on whether or not highschool students are or should be made, aware of this inequity. Several participants indicated that they did not think it was important to make

highschool students aware. A female participant stated:

> I know when I first started doing word problems, I wanted to make sure I didn't make a point of saying; "Well a guy has better marks than a girl!" Or using names in the class or that more guys were used in examples ... A female is not going to go "Excuse me Miss! You didn't use a female example in the last two days, where is my female representative?" I don't think the kids notice it. I think the teachers are the politically correct people and they are putting too much on it and they are making an issue out of something that really nobody, the kids who are important don't really think about it and don't really care unless it is pushed on them. (Focus Group # 5 Transcript, p. 3-4)

Initially this female felt it was important to be aware of gender inequity in the classroom. Thus, one can ask, when and from whom did she acquire this belief? An even more crucial question is when and under what circumstances, did she alter this belief?

A female participant in the same focus group session, disagreed with the female quoted above and shared her experience in a teaching placement. "I've seen kids. I saw a girl get upset because there was a use of the word man instead of people ... So some kids are sensitive to it" (Focus Group # 5 Transcript, p. 4).

Another female student shared one of her experiences during practice teaching. "The females in the classroom would tell me if a girl hadn't went up to the front yet to put a sticker or something. And then I started realizing I was unaware. I was really naive. I just thought I was treating everyone the same"

(Focus Group # 1 Transcript, p. 11). Sadker, Sadker, & Steindam (1989) state that teachers are often not aware of the subtle ways in which they treat male and female students differently (p. 47).

Another female participant provided an explanation for why students lack awareness. She described her own experiences in highschool:

> We didn't really notice it as kids. I think a lot of it was that we weren't looking for it. You don't think about well you put your hand up and you are not getting called. You don't think well how many boys, how many girls ... So maybe it's just cause we didn't see them when we were kids, we just didn't know. (Focus Group # 3 Transcript, p. 8)

4. ***Preservice Students' Awareness of Gender Inequity***

The level of awareness and the understanding of gender inequity varied from student to student. Several participants indicated that they had not witnessed or experienced gender bias in their educational career or during their practice teaching placements. A male wrote: "I feel the emphasis placed on gender issues in the classroom [is] unwarranted due to the fact that most women are equal and are treated as such in all situations that I have experienced" (Pre/Post Intervention "Self Appraisal Questionnaire Notes, p. 1). A female wrote: "I have not found any situations in my classrooms where sexism is a problem. I believe that anyone, no matter what sex, can do anything they put their

mind to" (Pre/Post Intervention "Self Appraisal" Questionnaire Notes, p. 1). Several participants seemed to assume that because they did not witness or experience gender inequity it did not exist.

Other preservice students acknowledged that gender inequity existed, but claimed that they had never witnessed or experienced it. One female wrote:

> I know that this [gender inequity] exists; however, I still don't think that I saw any of this when I went to high school. I've been in biology all my career and have found it very fair and I have been treated equally. (Pre/Post Intervention "Self Appraisal" Questionnaire Notes, p. 2)

A second female wrote; "In my experience, most teachers treated female and male students in the same manner; however, there were courses where the material and/or the teacher favoured male students" (Pre/Post Intervention "Self Appraisal" Questionnaire Notes, p. 3).

Several participants claimed that they were unaware of gender inequity in education until they came to the Faculty of Education. A female participant exclaimed;

> I'd never really thought about it because my undergrad was predominately females in the class. ... And then I come here and all of a sudden it became an issue, and we just keep talking about it. I'm thinking: "What are you

> talking about?" I've never experienced this! And I don't think I ever have still. (Focus Group # 3 Transcript, p. 3)

A male commented that he had been unaware of gender inequity before a female friend at the Faculty brought it to his attention (Focus Group # 4 Moderator Notes, p. 1).

Issues Of The Treatment Of Female Students In Education

Some sub-themes that emerged from the focus group data were: student/teacher interactions; inclusive language; sexual harassment; gendered subjects particularly science, languages, physical education and sport. These sub-themes will each be discussed in further detail in this section.

1. ***Student/Teacher Interactions***

The level of awareness of teacher/student interactions varied from student to student. Although many participants were unaware of differences in teachers' interactions with female and male students prior to entering the Bachelor of Education program, several indicated that they had discussed teacher/student interactions in their preservice courses. A female stated: "The one thing that we have been talking about in three of our classes is that teachers tend to give boys more attention. So if a girl's and a boy's hand are up, they tend to ask the boy (Focus Group # 3 Transcript, p. 2).

Some participants indicated that they had observed that their associate teacher tended to interact with male students more often than female students. A female participant described such an occurrence:

> I didn't have an opportunity to watch him teach very much, but I did have an opportunity to see him interact with the students ... he'd sit at the door and talk to the students as they went into the classroom. He would stop and talk to the boys about the football game, the football coaching and about how the basketball season was going, and how kick boxing lessons were coming along. And with the girls it would be; "Hello, How are you doing?" or "You look nice today!" or "What a lovely sweater!" Focusing on their appearance if he stopped to talk to them at all and very little comment about their social lives ... and I think in contrast to the way he was to the boys it was noticeable ... it was an absence. (Focus Group # 1 Transcript, p. 11)

This concurs with Sadker & Sadker's (1994) report that one area in which females are recognized more than boys is in the area of physical appearance (p. 13). Teachers often compliment female students on their outfits, earrings and hair styles.

Several participants expressed their frustration at the difficulty of attempting to interact evenly with their male and female students during their teaching placement:

> I had a grade 4/5 class, and the boys constantly sought attention and the girls would always just sit there. The guys were always asking questions and putting their hands up, and I tried to even it out, but it was always the same people that put up their hands, and I didn't want to ask people who didn't have their hand up. So it seemed

> like I was always asking the boys, but there were only a few girls who would put up their hands to answer a question. The girls would wait and put up their hands, the guys would just yell out the question or whatever the answer was. (Focus Group # 3 Transcript, p. 4)

A second female stated;

> During my practicum in highschool math, my associate brought up the point that I was calling on the boys in the class more than the girls. I don't know if it was so much that I was picking the boys instead of the girls because I was looking for answers from everyone ... The boys actually said more, [were] eager to answer. They were willing to take chances with what their answers were. So automatically their hands would go up or they would yell out the answer. Whereas if you asked a girl, she would have to sit and think about it or she wouldn't feel comfortable bringing it up ... But it was a case of me actually think well I'm not going to be fair. I'm going to ask the boys. (Focus Group Transcript # 5, p. 10)

This female indicated that although she was aware of inequitable treatment of males and females she chose not to be equitable because it aided her survival in the classroom.

Another preservice student indicated that he was aware of gender bias in teacher/student interactions, but he felt that teachers could not do anything about the fact that males monopolize the classroom.

> If a guy is going to do it [put his hand up], you can't stop him! You could tell him to stop and the next time he will probably put up his hand again, but there is nothing you can do about a person speaking out. You don't have any control over that! (Focus Group # 1 Transcript, p. 3)

This is a complex problem. As Lundeberg (1997) suggested: "If teachers believe students and not teachers are to blame for bias in the classroom interaction, gender bias will continue" (p. 56).

A female student from a different focus group felt that teachers could do something to increase female participation in classes. She shared her attempt at getting more female students to participate in classroom discussions.

> I think we are in a position now as teachers to change that [increased male students interactions with teacher], and try to get everyone involved. I know, like you [referring to a female in her focus group] said you didn't want to ask girls that didn't have their hands up. And I was the same way. I would look at them and think "Please put your hand up! I want to ask you because you haven't said anything! I know you know the work!" ... But, sometimes I just did and it was fine. And they were more likely to put up their hands later. (Focus Group # 3 Transcript, p. 6)

This individual appeared to value equitable teaching strategies and attempted to utilize them in her teaching.

2. ***Inclusive Language***

Several participants felt that there were still stereotypical representations of females and males in textbooks and other resource materials. A female participant stated;

> Whenever I think about it [gender inequity in education], I think about textbooks and how they've slanted how we look at female and male issues in school ... [Textbooks]

> exemplify what the males have done in our society as opposed to what the females have done. (Focus Group # 2 Transcript, p. 1)

A male preservice student wrote; "I searched my science text for female role models in my first placement and found almost none" (Pre/Post Intervention "Self Appraisal" Questionnaire Notes, p. 2). A female participant stated that her education program did not promote gender equity within content materials.

> In language arts, there are a lot of male, female stereotypes that are in the literature that are still being used in classrooms and kids are still reading it. I don't think that the education program really promotes gender inequity in the literature. (Focus Group # 1 Transcript, p. 18)

Is this an isolated incident or are other faculties of education continuing to utilize content and resource materials that contain gender stereotypes or gender bias?

Several of the participants believed it was important to use gender inclusive language, but felt that sometimes it goes too far. A male participant stated;

> I think you have to [use gender inclusive language]. There's a point though, that you can go a little overboard, like changing history to herstory ... a lot of these terms were made in the fifties or earlier than that when traditionally the woman's role was in the house. They [gender exclusive words] send a hidden message ... you have to send the right message that everybody is equal and everybody can do whatever they want to. (Focus Group # 5 Transcript, p. 27)

Some participants stated that if they had to use a gender exclusive book in their classroom, they would use it as a teachable moment. A male participant contended:

> Use it as an example of how you are not supposed to write or how you are not supposed to approach things. And say: "We are in a society now where everyone is treated equal and this book was written in the seventies when it wasn't necessary or wasn't deemed necessary. And now this is the way society is and for the better." (Focus Group # 5 Transcript, p. 28)

As Shmurak & Ratliff (1994) suggested, when teachers do not have control over their curriculum materials, "they can still use the stereotyped depictions of women in books or the fact that no women appear at all as a jumping off point for discussion with students, thus raising students' awareness of these issues" (p. 66).

Other preservice education students disagreed with making it apparent to students that a particular book was gender exclusive. A female participant stated:

> I don't think you should make a big issue out of it [gender exclusive book] if the students don't think it is a big deal that the author wrote; "He did this and he did that". If they [students] are not going; "But what about the girls!", I don't see why you should bring it up because that'll just cause even more problems ... You're just asking for trouble! (Focus Group # 5 Transcript, p. 28)

This individual appears to condone discussion of gender issues only

when the students take the initiative to raise the issue. Her comments also suggest that children are unaware of gender issues in education.

Several participants felt they had little or no control over the books they use in their classrooms. A female student felt this was due to the fact that all the books that are permitted to be used in Ontario classrooms are listed in a document entitled Circular Fourteen (Focus group # 5 Transcript, p. 29).

A male participant suggested the lack of control is due to pressures placed on teachers to cover specified content matter. "If you are teaching English for instance, there might be three English teachers, and you want to have a book that's got similar content. So you are pretty limited" (Focus group # 5 Transcript, 29). The belief that a book's content is more important than the degree of inclusive language was expressed by several focus group participants.

3. ***Sexual Harassment***

The issue of sexual harassment was debated within all the focus group sessions. The preservice students were extremely sensitive to this issue and they claimed that this pre-occupied their thoughts during their first placements. A male preservice

student stated:

> You feel like you are under a microscope. You're so concerned that every little movement you do is being evaluated or you think it is. I noticed myself when I was teaching physical education classes, if I wanted a guy, let's say we were doing a drill, and I had to move the student's body over there, I would take his shoulders and I would turn him to show him what the drill was doing or to show them the right way to do it. But, when I was in my mixed class, I was very hesitant to touch a girl on the shoulder ... I almost held back because of all these issues in regards to sexual assault. I felt I was so careful about what I did and said. It was paranoia sometimes. It was that bad! (Focus Group # 1 Transcript, p. 13)

Several male and female preservice students exhibited such fears and indicated that it consumed their thoughts during the teaching placement.

A female student indicated that she felt that generally male teachers were more affected by sexual harassment issues, but that female teachers were not immune.

> I know there are more women that are being charged with assault or with sexual harassment, but I think, generally speaking, men are always more often the target for those, well not maybe the target because they might have done this. They might do things that are harassment. I think generally more men have to be more cautious than women still. (Focus Group # 1 Transcript, p. 14)

All of the participants appeared to be aware of the issue of student/teacher sexual assault and indicated that they did not put

themselves in a situation where other individuals may question their actions.

A female preservice student recalled a situation from her own elementary school days where a male teacher harassed female students in his class.

> When I was in grade 6/7, we had a teacher, a younger teacher who had just started, and he used to comment on the girls' changes, their bodily changes. And we used to be so embarrassed. Of course we weren't assertive. Now I look back and think; "Oh my god! If anyone ever said anything like that to me, I would complain to somebody!" But, we never did. We never said anything. He would always flirt with all the girls and comment; "Oh! You are certainly starting to round!" Now that I look back on it and it shocks me, but we never did anything about it because we just thought that was normal kind of behaviour and that we were going to have to put up with it. (Focus Group # 1 Transcript, p. 16)

This situation occurred approximately ten years ago, does this form of sexual harassment continue to occur in today's schools?

Several preservice students spoke of student/ student harassment. Two female participants shared their personal experiences with this form of harassment. One female recalled being humiliated in her grade seven and eight years, when male students slapped her bum while she walked in the halls or went past the lockers (Focus Group # 1 Transcript, p 15). This prompted a

second female to share her experience.

> I went to a junior high and it was the exact same thing! The sexual energy starts and the boys start noticing the girls are changing, and the grabbing of butts, even the slapping of bras, even grabbing your breasts. At that age you are not assertive at all so you just don't say anything. (Focus group # 1 Transcript, p. 16)

Both females stated that the teachers in the schools were aware of what was going on, but did nothing to stop such behaviours. Faulder (1992a:1992b) and Sadker, & Sadker (1994) profess that this is not an uncommon occurrence in today's schools. Sadker, and Sadker (1994) state;

> Many girls don't even realize that they have a right to protest ... and when they do come forward ... it is often dealt with quickly and nervously, it is swept under the rug, turned aside or even turned against the girl who had the courage to complain. (p. 9)

They also suggest that often "sexual harassment in schools is dismissed as normal and unavoidable 'boys will be boys' behaviour" (p. 13). Similarly, Bourne, & Gonick (1996) stated that student teachers often dismiss student/student harassment as "boys will be boys" behaviour (p. 24).

A third area of sexual harassment that emerged from the focus group data was female preservice teacher/male associate teacher harassment. Bourne & Gonick (1996) and Priegert Coulter (1995) both suggest that some male teachers categorize female teachers as

sexual objects rather than as teachers. A female preservice student shared her experience:

> When I was a student teacher last term, there was an older teacher in the school ... The first day he saw me he said; "Oh! She's a cutie!" He said it to my associate teacher and I, but it was within hearing distance of the students in the class ... I kind of smiled, a sort of smirk because I didn't want to say, "You Asshole!" But, at the same time, I felt that [his statement] diminished my ability to be an authority figure or not even an authority, but just a teacher for the students. I felt humiliated. I was a little angry. I knew maybe some of the students had heard that and that it would alter their opinion of me. I was worried. (Focus group # 1 Transcript, p. 9-10)

Even though she did not condone such behaviour, she chose not to speak to anyone about it (p. 10).

A fourth form of sexual harassment that was discussed during one focus group session was female teachers being harassed by male students. Priegert Coulter (1995) and Harmon Miller (1997) conclude that some male students rendered female teachers as more "woman" than teacher. Priegert Coulter (1995) reported that in her study "across the age groups, boys seized on an approach that rendered women teachers' the 'powerless object of male sexual discourse'" (p. 43). Priegert Coulter also suggests that a female teacher's authority is challenged more than a male teacher's authority (p. 35). Harmon Miller (1997) postulates that some male

students do not recognize the intellectual and scholastic abilities of female teachers (p. 21).

A female preservice student shared her experience of such harassment.

> I taught highschool math. I found being a female teacher in highschool was actually kind of rough. My associate was male and he had a large command of the class and he was very strict ... When I first went in teaching it was a big novelty because there was this new teacher. But, after about two weeks they started pushing me. I don't know so much if it was because I was female, but some of the students had actually made a few comments, not appropriate comments because I was female. Some of the male students in the class saw the difference, him [associate] being male and having so much control, and then someone like me coming in, and plus I was only the student teacher, plus I was female. I think they thought they could walk over me a lot more. (Focus Group # 5 Transcripts, p. 20)

She indicated that her associate teacher was not aware of the comments made by some of the male students. She also decided not to bring it to his attention.

4. ***Gendered Subjects***

Science: A female preservice student wrote: "... Science is traditionally a male - dominated field" (Pre/Post "Self Appraisal" Questionnaire Notes, p. 2). Another female stated: "Before, women weren't allowed or were discouraged from going into these subjects [science]" (Focus Group # 1 Transcripts, 1997, p. 21).

Several participants described engineering as being problematic for women. One male student wrote: "Engineers are by and large chauvinistic fools" (Pre/Post "Self Appraisal" Questionnaire, p. 1). Another male wrote: "Electrical Engineering was terrible for gender bias" (Pre/Post "Self Appraisal Questionnaire, p. 2).

A female preservice student described her experience with transition from an all girls' highschool to a predominately male engineering class in university:

> I went to an all girls school. One of the main issues that kept getting brought up from grade ten onward was the fact that girls learn differently than boys. I can't tell you how many times in physics class my teacher said; "I just read this great article that supports this again!" ... When I came into university, I was in engineering, I had a really big problem with transition because I went from one extreme to the other. I went from totally female to totally male. In most of my classes I was the only girl. (Focus Group # 3 Transcript, p. 12)

Another female student described a different experience. "In doing my science degree, everyone always asked me if I felt like I was a minority or if I felt discriminated against because I was a female. But I never felt either" (Pre/Post "Self Appraisal" Questionnaire, p. 1).

Several of the preservice students indicated that they had discussed the issue of single sex science classes for females. A

female student expressed her concerns about single sex classes:

> ... I'm concerned as to what is going to happen with the ingrained ideas that educators have ... When they decide to create a program for females only are they going to be watering it down? Are they going to be creating it in the same guise as a male program? Are they going to be looking at different issues, and different points of view? Is this going to make us come together as a people? Is this going to separate us more? ... Who is going to make those decisions as to what the program encompasses? (Focus Group # 2 Transcript, p. 7)

Another female student suggested two alternative ways to promote females in math and sciences; after school science and math clubs, and career days (Focus Group # 1 Transcript, p. 20).

Languages: The debate whether or not females are better in languages than males was discussed by several preservice students. A female focus group participant stated:

> They also say that in general, women are more apt at languages ... I mean obviously there are some women who aren't and some men that are ... There are probably more females that have this mind set or the thinking capacity that facilitates learning a second language. (Focus Group # 2 Transcript, p. 21)

A male student wrote: "It has been shown that females and males have different cognitive abilities ie.) females have been shown to be better in languages" (Pre/Post "Self Appraisal" Questionnaire, p. 1).

Three of the preservice students indicated during a focus group session that they had studied languages at university; they

described their classes. One female stated: "[In] all my French classes, there was maybe one guy all the time and sometimes there was just all girls" (Focus group # 2 Transcript, p. 20). Another female exclaimed to a male focus group participant who had been in her language class: "In French and it's true, there was probably about twenty five or so people in the class and there was three of you [males]" (Focus Group # 2 Transcript, p. 18). A male who was a French major suggested a reason for why males tend not to take languages in highschool:

> I think there was a whole attitude around the school that it was a female specialty [French]. And most guys that were good in French, they would [go] towards mathematics and sciences even if they stunk at it! Just because there [was] an image that if you [were] male [you had] to take math or science. Honestly, I couldn't believe that they did that. They would totally bail out of french because that was the way it was perceived. (Focus Group # 2 Transcript, p. 20)

Physical Education and Sport: The issue of female stereotyping in physical education and sport was discussed. A female focus group participant suggested that females are seen as being fragile (Focus Group #2 Transcript, p. 4). Several students suggested that females are not given the same opportunities in physical education and sport based on their own experiences as students in secondary

schools. One female exclaimed:

> When we got to grade eleven we got to choose what topics we wanted to take. They would have male only football, but they wouldn't have girls' football. They would have dance for girls, but they wouldn't have dance for boys ... The content that we could choose from was limited and it was very stereotypical! I mean rhythmic gymnastics for girls and touch football for boys! (Focus Group # 3 Transcript, p. 10)

A female student expressed her dissatisfaction with the current physical education curriculum being taught in schools.

> I am a phys. ed. major and to me there is the talk: "We got to do this!" We are going to do this! But no one has walked the walk yet. Everyone has the great ideas, but a lot of the times you go into the highschools and you have a department head that has been there for 15 years and he or she is used to: "Girls get in your little leotards and we are going to do jazz!" (Focus Group # 3 Transcript, p. 11)

Some preservice students indicated that during their teaching practicum they had noticed that many girls appeared to have lower self esteem in physical education classes.

> I think in the elementary grades, I was in a seven/eight class in my last placement ... the girls had lower self esteem especially when it came to phys. ed. classes. They weren't out in front of your face all the time. The girls tended to go back a little bit. (Focus Group # 3 Transcript, p. 17)

Another female stated:

> There is going to be a problem with those not so fit females or not so skilled females that are never called upon. Their self esteem is never going to increase

> because they don't think they are worth anything in phys. ed. and they are not going to continue with [it]. (Focus Group # 3 Transcript, p. 6)

Another female student suggested that male sports were seen as being more important than female sports.

> I was on the flag football outside of school ... We had our practices in the morning, but if there was a game for the guys that night or that day, they would be able to come in and take over the field. We would have to go elsewhere just because they had a game that day and they had to practice in the morning. (Focus Group # 3 Transcript, p. 10)

Another female argued that this mentality continues to exist at the post-secondary level.

> When you think about the women's and the men's games here at the university, for the women's game they hardly have any people there, and as soon as the men's game starts the gym is just packed! I think maybe in men's sports not just in university, but in highschool there is a greater emphasis on men's sports. (Focus Group # 5 Transcript, p. 15)

The Preservice Students' Experiences in Teacher Education

Some sub-themes that emerged from the focus group data were that gender inequity is reinforced in teacher education, that the degree to which preservice students examined gender in education varied, and that students stressed the importance of practice teaching. These sub-themes will be each discussed in further detail in this section.

1. ***Teacher Education Reinforces Gender Inequity***

The preservice students indicated that the interaction patterns they had viewed in the film "How schools fail girls" allowed them to identify the biased student/teacher interaction within their own education program. A female student noted:

> An interesting thing that was brought up in the film that we actually saw happen in our class was the fact that teachers often call on boys more ... Because one teacher in particular was talking about how girls are sometimes ignored in the classroom and then he proceeded to call on more boys ... he would challenge them further and create a more open discussion. Where as with the girls, he would say; "good point" or "next" and then moved on to the next person. (Focus Group # 1 Transcript, p. 2)

Another female commented that she felt that the curriculum content and suggested resource materials presented in the Faculty of Education reinforced gender inequity. She exclaimed:

> In language arts there are a lot of male and female stereotypes that are in the literature that are still being used in the classroom and kids are still reading it. I don't think that the education program's language arts component really promotes gender equity in the literature. (Focus Group # 1 Transcript, p. 18)

2. ***Degree To Which Gender in Education Is Examined***

When asked by the moderator if they felt that they had learned about gender inequity in their teacher education program, the responses varied. One female indicated that she had not thought about gender inequity until coming to the faculty (Focus Group # 3

Transcript, p. 3). Others indicated that they were made aware of gender inequity in other courses. A female student stated: "I had a women's studies course in university which opened my eyes tremendously to a lot of different issues, but I still have learned a lot here. But I was aware of a lot of issues before hand" (Focus Group # 3 Transcript, p. 15).

A male preservice student stated that he felt that the teacher education program lacked discussion of gender and failed to examine gender equitable teaching strategies (Focus Group # 1 Transcript, p. 18). A female student stated: "We haven't really talked a lot about gender issues. We may have spent one period where we discussed it a little bit" (Focus Group # 5, p. 6).

Other students felt that they had been exposed to the issues of gender in education, but felt that they were not provided with examples of how to deal with these issues. A female student reported: "I think that here we've been exposed to the issues. They say this is what happens, but they don't give us any ideas about how we, as future teachers, can change it" (Focus Group # 3 Transcript, p. 19). Another female student exclaimed;

> We had one course that addressed sexism and all it did was address it. Our assignment was to look for anecdotes of sexism. We wrote them down, but we never addressed them. We never [discussed] how we could fix that as teachers. (Focus Group # 3 Transcript, p. 20)

Research conducted by Campbell & Sanders (1997) concurs with the opinions of the two female students cited above. Campbell & Sanders report that professors spend less time on equity solutions than they do on equity issues (p. 72).

3. ***Practice Teaching***

Several of the preservice students stated that they valued their teaching practicums more than they did the courses they took in their education program. A female student commented: "A lot of my colleagues are extremely frustrated having been out on the practicum and coming back and saying: "What are we learning this for?" I've learned more from my practicum than I did here" (Focus Group # 3 Transcript, p. 20). This valuing of practical experience and devaluing of theory is not uncommon. Bailey, Scantlebury, & Letts IV (1997) write:

> Preservice teachers develop a split personality regarding theory and practice ... They have difficulty resolving theory and practice into one functioning unit because when practice is complicated by extraneous variables, the link between theory and practice becomes tenuous in their minds ... To keep their egos and preconceived notions of about real-world teaching intact, preservice teachers develop disclaimers in which they devalue theory that does not fit their preconceived ideas of teachers and teaching ... These disclaimers help preservice teachers rationalize their choice of familiar, comfortable teaching strategies with little regard for pedagogical appropriateness. (p. 32)

Bailey, Scantlebury & Letts IV (1997) assert that when student teachers enter the world of teaching, they give more credence to behaviours that co-operating teachers model than those modeled by university supervisors; therefore, "feedback from co-operating teachers can be more influential than the course work or university supervisor's feedback" (p. 34). These researchers suggest that the "co-operating teacher is the key, that co-operating teachers educated in equitable teaching strategies influence their student teacher's teaching to be more equitable" (p. 34). These researchers also acknowledge that field experience in a school where the co-operating teacher does not practice equitable teaching strategies may result in the student teacher replicating such inequitable strategies which in turn may reinforce traditional gender role stereotypes (p. 30).

Several of the preservice students indicated that survival in the teaching practicum was of utmost importance. They indicated that survival took precedent over using equitable teaching strategies. A male student commented;

> I was just trying to get my little niche in the classroom, trying to make my presence. It was only four weeks so I really was concerned about getting my work done ... I was more focused on "me", it was sad to say, than the students ... I wanted to get it to be so right, that I overlooked the most obvious things, the students.

> And in retrospect I can see that now. (Focus Group # 1 Transcript, p. 7)

A female student commented:

> I think it is hard for us to judge how we teach because it was our first, well it might be some people's second teaching placement. I think when you are new at everything, you are not only trying to learn how to teach effectively, plan your daily lesson plans, get along with your associate, you are struggling with all those things ... And I think to add on really evaluating your subconscious actions towards males and females is a really hard task. It is something we can do, but it is really difficult! (Focus Group # 1 Transcript, p. 12)

Perceived Expectations Of Male And Female Teachers

Some sub-themes that emerged from the focus group data were a perception that there is an increasing demand for male primary school teachers, and that students react to the gender of the teacher. These sub-themes will each be discussed in further detail in this section.

1. *Male Primary Teachers*

The increasing demand for male primary school teachers was discussed by several of the focus group participants. A female stated: "It seems in the past more females were educators and now there is a trend towards hiring more males especially for the younger grades" (Focus Group # 3 Transcript, P. 1). Several participants commented that they felt that females possess a certain nurturing quality that makes them suitable for teaching

young children (Focus Group # 5 Transcript, p. 19). Benton DeCorse & Vogtle (1997) write that this is not an uncommon perception "... public perception of who makes the best teacher has not changed. The best teacher for elementary students has been identified as female ..." (p. 38).

A male participant commented that although he agreed that women possess a certain nurturing quality, he felt that there were several males that could relate well to young children. A male participant shared his experience of having a male grade two teacher. He stated: "Among the kids it was seen that it was strange to have this grade two teacher, it was considered very strange" (Focus Group # 5, p. 20).

Benton Decorse & Vogtle (1997) and Montecinos & Nielson (1997) suggest that more males should be encouraged to enter the primary education field given the absence of male role models for many children growing up in single parent homes headed by women. Benton DeCorse & Vogtle (1997) suggest that a lack of male role models indicates a lack of a strong male presence in children's lives which may teach children that being a school teacher is a suitable accomplishment for females, but not for males (p. 38). Montecinos, & Nielson (1997) suggest that the presence of more male elementary

teachers can aid in the elimination of such sex segregation in the teaching workforce (p. 48).

2. ***Students React to the Gender of the Teacher***

Several of the focus group participants stated that they felt that children react to the gender of the teacher. Priegert Coulter (1995) concurs with this observation and states: "students respond differently to female and male teachers and expect different things from them" (p. 42). A female related her experience: "One thing that I noticed especially during my practicum [was that] students react differently to the gender of the teacher" (Focus Group # 3 Transcript, p. 3). This female indicated that the female students in her practicum class felt extremely comfortable asking her various questions on material she had, and had not, taught on her placement while the male students only asked questions that related to the material she had taught in class (p. 3).

A male preservice student commented that it appeared to him that male teachers commanded respect more quickly than female teachers (Focus Group # 5 Transcript, p. 22). Several of the preservice students suggested that this was due to the fact that the physical presence of a male is often greater than that of a female (Focus Group # 5 Transcript, p. 19). Feinman-Nemser & Buchmann (1987) report that some female student teachers have

reported that "being short, female, and soft spoken put them at a disadvantage compared to taller male student teachers" (p. 260).

Summary

The four dominant themes that emerged from the focus group data are: the perceptions of education students; the issues of the treatment of female students in education; the preservice students' experiences in teacher education; and the perceived expectations of male and female teachers. Each theme will be briefly mentioned.

Theme number one, *'The Perceptions of Education Students'*, has four sub-themes. These sub-themes are: women as nurturers; changing times and improvements for women; highschool students' awareness of gender inequity; and preservice students' awareness and understanding of gender inequity.

Theme number two, *'Issues of the Treatment of Female Students in Education'*, has four sub-themes. These sub-themes are: student/teacher interactions; inclusive language; sexual harassment; and gendered subjects particularly science, languages, and physical education and sport.

Theme number three, *'Preservice Students' Experiences in Teacher Education'*, has three sub-themes. The sub-themes are: that teacher education reinforces inequity; that preservice students

examine gender in varying degrees; and that preservice students identify practice teaching as being the most important element of their teacher training.

Theme number four, *'Perceived Expectations of Male and Female Teachers'*, has two sub-themes. These sub-themes are a perception that there is an increasing demand for male primary teachers, and that students react to the gender of the teacher.

CHAPTER FIVE

Conclusions

As educators and teachers, we must constantly remind ourselves why we have chosen to study a particular phenomenon or area of interest. My research involved examining the perceptions of preservice students enrolled in a one year Bachelor of Education program at a small university in North Western Ontario. This was done using focus group methodology supplemented by "self appraisal" questionnaires.

Before I discuss the issues that arose in these focus groups, I would like to mention three related areas which were a part of the literature but which were not a part of my research findings. These areas are: the androcentricity of child developmental theories, the advocacy of gender issues in general principle rather than in actual practice by teacher educators and teachers, and the inclusion of gender issues in education courses outside of the education class that I used as a sample population.

The two research questions that immediately come to mind after reviewing the available literature are: "What are preservice teachers perceptions of gender issues?" and "Are 'gender issues' an integral component of prospective teacher training?" Answering

these two questions became my main focus throughout the study. I will now revisit each question individually.

Preservice Teachers' Perceptions of Gender Issues

At all stages of the research, I reflected upon what was being said by the preservice education students. Some of the perceptions reported to me were similiar to the perceptions in the research literature, but I did receive some new and insightful information. There were five areas which were continually a part of the students' perceptions of gender issues. These areas were: a) the prescribed roles of males and females; b) the invisibility of gender inequity; c) the importance of practice teaching; d) the belief that gender issues are female issues and; e) the resistance to gender equity initiatives. These issues were consistent themes in the focus group discussions. One theme emerged from the focus group sessions that was not found in the preservice literature. This theme was harassment of female student teachers by male teachers and students. It will also be discussed in this section.

The Prescribed Roles Of Males And Females

The acknowledgment by the preservice education students of the existence of prescribed roles for females and males occurred almost immediately after the commencement of each focus group session. The preservice students provided several examples of such roles,

and the notion of females as nurturers and males as aggressors was expressed by all participants.

While most of the students stated that they did not agree with the allotment of such roles, they indicated that their families, friends, even they, themselves, frequently took on these roles. None of the participants in this study overtly stated why certain roles were prescribed to a particular sex or how individuals learned to take on certain roles. It appeared that most had not thought through gender roles. They did not differentiate between choosing a role or conforming to the role. Several of the focus group participants suggested that individuals took on particular roles because they enjoyed doing these roles. The examination of gender roles was a new experience for the students. Consequently, they were unable to discuss the issue in great detail. This is surprising considering the attention that recently has been paid to this issue.

The Invisibility Of Gender

In several of the focus group sessions, the students suggested that elementary and secondary students do not notice gender inequity. Similarly, they suggested that teachers and teacher educators also appear to not notice gender inequity. Several students shared incidents in which they had observed inequitable

teacher/student interactions during their practice teaching sessions. Others provided specific examples of gender inequity that they had observed or experienced at the Faculty of Education. Some of the focus group participants indicated that the interaction patterns they had seen in the film; "How Schools Fail Girls" allowed them to identify the biased student/teacher interactions with associate teachers and teacher educators.

The invisibility of gender inequity was particularly evident when gender exclusive language was discussed. Several of the education students indicated that inclusive language issues were being raised by the 'politically correct' people. Many expressed the belief that elementary and secondary students do not notice whether the language used in textbooks or by teachers is gender exclusive or gender inclusive. Others felt that the language used in schools was already gender inclusive and that this issue was a thing of the past. They saw no need for emphasis on the use of gender inclusive language in schools. Others indicated that they have no control over the language incorporated in textbooks and other resources because a Ministry of Education document outlines the books that are permitted to be used in classrooms. These students resisted the use of inclusive language in schools.

Resistance is normal in a society where teachers and educational professionals have not examined their own role in a gendered society. Some teachers resist implementing gender equitable teaching strategies by stating that students do not notice gender inequity. Simply stating that there is not a problem does not make the gender inequities identified through educational research disappear. This rationalization does nothing to lessen or eliminate such practices.

To decrease or eliminate gender bias and stereotyping in schools, teachers and students need the opportunity to become aware of, and to reflect upon, the differential treatment that males and female students receive. Teachers could use specific equitable strategies to decrease and prevent gender bias. Teachers also require cooperation and support from their colleagues and the administrative staff when implementing equitable teaching strategies (Sadker, & Sadker, 1985, p. 361).

Teacher awareness of gender inequality alone appears not to be enough to eliminate such practices. Perhaps teachers need to be rewarded for their efforts to be equitable in the classroom with tangible rewards such as a favourable teaching review that can be used for job promotion and career advancement.

The Importance Of Practice Teaching

In each focus group session the importance of the teaching practicum was stressed by all the participants. Many preservice students felt that this was the most important and helpful component of their teaching preparation. Several indicated they had learned the most about teaching while with their associate teachers in the classroom. This finding concurs with the literature (Crozier, & Menter, 1993; Feinman-Nemser, & Buchmann, 1987; Maher, & Rathbone, 1986; Menter, 1989). The student teachers also indicated that survival was their top priority during their practice teaching sessions. Similiar findings were reported by Skelton (1989) and Skelton, & Hanson (1989).

Several students indicated that they were not able to use gender equitable teaching strategies because they were too busy trying to decide what to teach and trying to maintain control over their students. Others acknowledged that they consciously chose to be **inequitable** in order to maintain control of their students. For example, a female stated that she just kept asking the boys questions because when she asked the girls they said "We don't know". She did this to keep her class running smoothly.

It was difficult to keep students focused on gender issues because they wanted to respond to the stress levels of practice

teaching. Many students described their teaching practicum as being very stressful. Some described themselves as being paranoid because they felt as if they were being watched at all times and stated that if they were asked or expected to use gender equitable teaching strategies this stress level would increase. Being aware of gender inequity at the teacher preparation level is important, but inservice training must also examine gender. As student teachers enter the work force and gain some experience perhaps they will be able to concentrate more on equitable teaching strategies, but they need to deal first with curriculum content and classroom management. Faculties of Education, colleges of teachers, school boards and teacher federations should work cooperatively to create ways to eliminate or decrease gender inequity in schools at the preservice and inservice levels.

Role modelling may be the key to helping students learn how to be gender equitable. Bourne & Gonick (1996) stress that "most teacher educators recognize the crucial role played by the associate teacher in the development and improvement of student teaching practices" (p. 27). This role, as primary teacher educator, could be used to help students become more aware of gender issues in education. As Bourne & Gonick (1996) argue, "If we are to achieve truly gender-equitable education, then it is

vitally important that student teachers be paired with school associates who are good role models" (p. 27). Student teachers often emulate the teaching strategies that are demonstrated by their associate teachers so these teachers could have a profound effect on individual teaching decisions.

The process by which associate teachers are selected to become mentors for student teachers is often left to chance and to the bureaucracy. Those responsible for teacher education need to examine the criteria for becoming an associate teacher. A training program for individuals who wish to become associate teachers could also be devised so that the faculty advisors, associate teachers and student teachers have similar expectations of the teaching practicum. Most teacher education programs require that a written evaluation be done on the student teacher for each practicum. Consequently, to make equitable teaching strategies an important part of the students' teaching evaluations this item could be included as a component on the practice teaching report.

The Belief That Gender Issues Are Female Issues

It was the female students who felt most responsible for examining and addressing gender issues. In all five focus group sessions it was evident that the majority of students felt that gender issues were female issues. A male preservice student

stated: "When I hear gender and education, I don't have this picture of dealing with the concerns of boys or men. It's dealing with the concerns of women. That's how I see it" (Focus Group # 1 Transcript, p. 5).

This was evident in the number of women and men that elected to participate in the focus group sessions. There was very poor attendance by men, with the exception of the all male focus group which had one hundred percent attendance. I began to ask myself whether I had reached the entire population. Perhaps those who 'needed' the opportunity to discuss and examine gender issues in schools were not there. While it was apparent that the individuals who did participate had some interest in discussing gender issues, perhaps those who had elected not to participate failed to see the relevance or importance of gender issues. Further research could be conducted to examine the effectiveness of interventions and to design methods to reach this population.

The majority of the males that did participate indicated that they were very comfortable being around women. One male suggested that men felt uncomfortable discussing gender inequity and resisted such interventions for fear that they appear 'unmanly'. He also suggested that such resistance is an act to appear 'macho' in an mixed gender environment, and that men really do take gender issues

seriously (Focus Group # 2, p. 12). Frank (1996) takes this idea one step further and suggests that the resistance that men exhibit towards gender issues results from their fears of being seen as non-masculine which is equated with being homosexual (p. 120-121).

This male peer pressure was discussed in the all male focus group. These men stated that they enjoyed discussing gender in an all male setting because they felt that they were free to say things that they would not say in the presence of women in the company of other men. Further research is required to examine why these males participated in greater numbers when it was a single-sex group and if this occurrence was specific to my research. Research could also be done to identify the advantages and disadvantages of single-sex and co-educational focus groups when examining gender issues.

The notion that gender issues are female issues is a common misconception. Gender equitable teaching strategies and policies are beneficial to both males and females (Sadker, & Sadker, 1994). The cries of reverse discrimination, the belief that by helping the girls you are disadvantaging the boys are false (McGee Bailey, 1996). Females and males benefit mutually from equitable teaching strategies.

Women students have noticed the extra expectations placed on them to become advocates for gender issues. A female student stated:

> We've had gender issues raised in a few classes, but if you wanted to explore it further books have been suggested and references ... usually it was the females who sought out these references. Very few of the male students have approached professors on these matters. I don't know if it's a big concern to them as it is to a female student. (Focus Group # 2 Transcript, p. 8)

To decrease or eliminate gender inequity both female and male teachers must have the opportunity to reflect upon and identify gender inequity in education. It would be necessary for men and women to work cooperatively to utilize teaching strategies that decrease or eliminate gender inequity in education. Males need to be encouraged to participate in discussions of gender issues in education to dispel the myth that gender issues are solely female issues.

Resistance To Gender Equity Initiatives

Throughout all five focus group sessions there was resistance on the part of some of the preservice education students towards gender equity initiatives. Some students, both male and female, felt that gender issues were non-issues and that gender inequity did not exist. Others indicated that they felt that times had changed and that women and men were now treated equally. Others

felt that because teachers have completed a higher level of education they would not be inequitable.

Some of the males in the focus group reported that they felt that they were being bashed and belittled by teacher educators who raised gender issues in their classes. A male student commented:

> I think we have to be careful because I am well aware of these gender issues. I mean it is beaten into us everyday in the media, in the classroom. I shouldn't say beaten into you, I mean we talk about it all the time ... You have to be careful because guys really feel bad! I know that in my own class you get the feeling that "men are such pigs", "we are so bad", "we are so evil"! And this is what it is coming out to be and I think it is wrong. (Focus Group # 1 Transcript, p. 3)

Rakow (1991) reports that this is not an unusual reaction for males and that a number of feminist teachers have reported resistance to their teaching of equity issues (p. 11). She also reports that some feminist teachers experience aggressive and disruptive behaviour on the part of male students especially "white" male students (p. 11).

In my study the all "white" male focus group associated gender issues with feminism. They reacted negatively to the term feminism and associated it with radicalism and being female. It is my belief that there is a range of views as to what feminist theory encompasses, what it means to be a feminist, and who can be a feminist. To ensure equity for all, all people must acknowledge

and be accepting of one another's similarities and differences. Equity means working together to create an environment in which all people prosper.

Harassment Of Female Student Teachers

The one area that was not discussed in great detail in the literature but was prominent in the focus groups for this study was the issue of female student teachers being sexually harassed by male teachers and students. Some of the female focus group participants suggested that students reacted to the student teachers' gender, but they did not discuss their reactions to this differential treatment.

Students in all of the focus groups raised the issue of sexual harassment in schools. The issue of sexual harassment was foremost in their minds and they indicated that this issue was discussed in great length at the Faculty of Education. The majority discussed student/ teacher sexual harassment and were very aware of the consequences of such behaviour. This type of harassment is well documented in the literature (Faulder, 1992a:1992b; Sadker & Sadker, 1994). The topic of harassment of female student teachers is not well documented. In the focus groups, two women shared their personal experiences of being

harassed by either a male teacher or students on their first practice teaching session.

The decision made by these two individuals to not report such incidences and their belief that it was somehow their fault are consistent with the reporting patterns of experienced women teachers. Coulter Priegert's (1995) and Harmon Miller's (1997) research findings suggest that women teachers often blame themselves for the harassment; they exhibit high degrees of self doubt.

A number of research studies have found that it is not uncommon for women teachers to find themselves being treated as sex objects by male teachers and students (Burgess, 1989; Brisken, 1990; Priegert Coulter, 1995; Cunnison, 1988; Joyce, 1987; Richards, 1997). Male teachers and students often label female teachers as more 'woman' than teacher (Priegert Coulter, 1995, p. 35).

Harmon Miller (1997) argues that "little research exists that describes the experiences of female student teachers and the meaning of being a female learning how to teach ... " (p. 19). Priegert Coulter (1995) writes:

> ... [Teacher] preparatory programmes in Canada are largely silent on or provide only the most cursory introduction to gender issues and then usually focus

> exclusively on gender relations to the experiences of pupils rather than in relation to the work experiences of teachers. (p. 35)

Student teachers are often not aware of the gender nature of teaching and are not prepared for the gender experiences that occur in classrooms.

Male teachers' and students' treatment of female student teachers during practice teaching placements is an issue that has yet to be discussed in teacher preparation programs. I suspect that additional research would confirm that female students at other Faculties of Education have had similiar experiences. Teachers, teacher educators, parents and students need to recognize overtly that students react to the teacher's gender. Further research is required to investigate why, and how, this occurs. Teachers and students alike have the right to protection from harassment in schools.

The Inclusion of Gender Issues in Faculties of Education

As I attempted to answer the question "Are 'gender' issues an integral component of prospective teacher training?" I reflected on what the students in my study had reported, what the literature had described and my personal observations at the Faculty of Education. Perhaps the most revealing finding was that gender continues to be a major organizational construct within educational

institutions and that the problematization of gender continues to be ignored despite increased awareness and discussion of gender inequity in education. This leads to a discussion of resistance and theoretical frameworks of gender.

Gender As A Problematic Organizational Construct

As children enter schools, they bring with them a preconceived notion of what it means to be a girl or a boy. Piazza, Chevalier, & Caldwell (1995) argue that these gender roles are based on sex role stereotyping (p. 211). As a result, prescribed gender roles are problematic and have resulted in the inequitable treatment of boys and girls in schools (American Association of University Women, 1992; Sadker, & Sadker, 1994).

Interventions that have attempted to decrease or eliminate such gender inequities have focused on elementary and secondary schools. These interventions have had various degrees of success because students, teachers and educational professionals resist such initiatives. This resistance may be a direct result of the invisibility of gender issues. Gender is not seen to be a problem at the elementary and secondary school levels.

As student teachers enter Faculties of Education, they bring with them their 'gendered' roles and expectations and the notion that gender issues are non-issues. The gender inequities that

were experienced or witnessed by these students in their own schools days are often repeated in teacher preparation programs. Gender inequities might be actively perpetuated in Faculties of Education. Gender continues to operate as an organizational construct.

Very little research has been conducted in Faculties of Education to examine how gender issues are discussed in initial teacher training (Bourne, & Gonick, 1996; Lucidi, 1994; Sikes, 1991; Skelton, 1989; Skelton, & Hanson, 1989). In an attempt to expand the available literature on the topic, I asked the students to describe how gender issues were incorporated into their teacher preparation program.

The responses varied. Some felt that gender issues were addressed but others felt that while gender issues had been discussed, they had not been adequately addressed. They stated that they were not provided with the specific skills and strategies needed to deal with such gender issues. This finding is supported by the literature (American Association of University Women; 1991; Bailey, Scantlebury, & Letts IV, 1997; Campbell, & Sanders, 1997; Priegert Coulter, 1995; Lucidi, 1994).

Others felt that gender issues were not addressed at all and that they were actively perpetuated in teacher preparation

programs. Similiar findings have been reported by Bailey, & Burden (1988), Christensen, & Massey (1989), Dunkin, Precians, & Nettle (1994), Kagan (1992), Masland (1994), McCune, & Mathews (1975), Sadker, & Sadker (1980:1994), Sikes (1991), Sikes, & Hanson (1989), Skelton (1987), and Titus (1993).

Two findings emerged from observations of the students' reactions to this gender equity intervention and from my past experiences teaching gender issues to preservice education students. The first was that gender issues continue to be seen as non-issues by teacher educators and Faculties of Education and the second was that even when teacher educators discuss and examine gender issues in their education courses, they are met with resistance from students, co-workers and faculty administrations. Several researchers report similiar findings (Lundeberg, 1997; Menter, 1989; Rakow, 1991; Sikes, 1991; Skelton, & Hanson, 1989). Dealing with this resistance may be the key to addressing gender inequity in education.

Examining Resistance Using Theoretical Frameworks

When examining the resistance that students, teachers, and educational professionals display towards gender equity interventions, close attention needs to be paid to the theoretical underpinnings of such interventions. Individuals that design such

interventions often have a different understanding of gender than the population they wish to reach.

While academics are currently examining gender from a postmodern perspective among academics (Bulter, 1992; Di Stefano, 1990; Flax, 1990; Fraser, & Nicholson, 1990) my research suggests that the 'Sex Role Theory' framework is being used in schools and Faculties of Education to understand gender. Since the creators of interventions and the participants in such interventions construct gender in different ways, resistance is not surprising.

Researchers and educational professional need to examine how gender is constructed by the students and the teachers they wish to reach. Providing students and teachers with interventions that are based on a theoretical underpinning of gender that is not recognized or acknowledged by this group is an equation for disaster. Only when researchers and educational professional begin to understand how their target populations understand gender can they begin to create interventions that are affective.

Recommendations

An individual's beliefs, attitudes, and values start to be developed from the moment of his/her birth. There are various social agencies such as family, peers and schools that play a role

in the development of these beliefs, attitudes and values. Consequently, it is not surprising that children enter school with a well developed perception of what it means to be a boy or a girl.

Research suggests that often these perceptions are based on gender stereotypes. If these stereotypes fail to be addressed and examined by families, peers, and educational institutions, then prospective teachers may bring these stereotypes into their classrooms. Faculties of Education are perhaps one of the last settings where a large mass of prospective teachers can be provided with opportunities to reflect upon their attitudes, values, and beliefs regarding gender and how this affects their teaching.

When prospective teachers are given the opportunity to examine gender issues, they can begin to develop the skills, strategies, and resources that can be utilized in their classrooms. Prospective teachers may not recognize the importance of gender equity while enrolled in the Faculty of Education; however, if they were given this opportunity they may come to see the role gender plays at a future date.

I realize that attitudes, beliefs, and values cannot be altered overnight. I acknowledge that it takes vast periods of time to alter attitudes, beliefs, and values regarding gender. However, I believe that Faculties of Education could work together

with parents, students, teachers and other educational professionals to examine gender issues in education. Since my research study examined gender issues in initial teacher education there are three areas in which I will make recommendations: teacher education programs, teacher educators, and further research.

Recommendations for Teacher Education Programs

1. That teacher education programs examine the courses that they offer for gender stereotyping and gender exclusive language.
2. That teacher education programs offer course(s) that deal solely with gender issues in education.
3. That teacher education programs encourage and reward teacher educators for discussing and modelling equitable teaching strategies.
4. That teacher education program co-ordinators examine how associate teachers are selected to be mentors for student teachers.
5. That teacher education program administrators examine the criteria for becoming an associate teachers.
6. That those responsible for teacher education programs ensure that the associate teachers selected to be mentors

for education students are practitioners of equitable teaching strategies.

7. That a component of teacher education programs be a training program for prospective associate teachers so that associate teachers, faculty advisors and students have the same expectations for the practice teaching sessions.

8. That teacher education programs make the demonstration of equitable teaching strategies an evaluated component of the practice teaching sessions. This may be done by placing it as an item to be evaluated on student teachers' practice teaching evaluation report.

9. That teacher education programs, school boards, colleges of teachers and teaching federations could work cooperatively at the preservice and inservice levels to decrease or eliminate gender inequity in education.

Recommendations for Teacher Educators

1. That teacher educators examine how gender equity is presented in the textbooks and resources used in their classes.

2. That teacher educators examine the content of textbooks and resource used in their classes for gender exclusive language and sex role stereotyping.
3. That teacher educators work to dispel the myth that gender issues are only women's issues.
4. That teacher educators encourage men to participate in discussions of gender.
5. That teacher educators make gender issues an integral component of their education courses.
6. That teacher educators model and provide their students with equitable teaching strategies.
7. That teacher educators provide their students with the opportunity to reflect upon and identify gender inequity in education.
8. That teacher educators provide students with the opportunity to reflect on how they apply principles of gender awareness.

Recommendations for Further Research

Additional research could:

1. examine how gender issues are examined in Faculties of Education.

2. examine the effectiveness of "Gender Issues" courses offered at Faculties of Education.
3. examine the advantages and disadvantages of existing gender equity interventions in an attempt to design more affective interventions.
4. take into account the theoretical frameworks for understanding gender when examining what actually occurs in teacher preparation programs.
5. utilize focus group methodology to identify education students' perceptions of gender and education to enhance the available literature.
6. examine why some education students resist gender equity issues as reported by some teacher educators.
7. identify the advantages and disadvantages of single-sex and co-educational focus groups when examining gender issues.
8. examine how and why students react to the gender of a teacher.
9. examine how female student teachers are treated by male students.
10. examine how female student teachers are treated by male teachers.

The recommendations that I have listed are not innovative. When one examines the available literature and the research studies that have been done in the past it becomes apparent that these recommendations have been made before. What is surprising is that the recommendations have not been addressed. Gender issues in education continue to be ignored. It is my hope that Faculties of Education, teacher educators, students and future researchers act upon these recommendations in an attempt to decrease or eliminate gender inequity in education.

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Appendix A: Self Appraisal Questionnaire

Questionnaire

Sex. Female _____ **Male** _____

Division: Primary/ Junior _____ **Junior/Intermediate** _____ **Intermediate/Senior** _____

Undergraduate Degree(s): _____

Please circle whether you agree or disagree with the following statements.

1. In general, males and females are treated equally in the classroom environment.	**Agree**	**Disagree**
2. Females speak up in class more often than males do.	**Agree**	**Disagree**
3. Teachers give male and female students different feedback.	**Agree**	**Disagree**
4. Most educators include female related issues in their classrooms.	**Agree**	**Disagree**
5. Sexist stereotyping concerning females' academic performances are still prevalent in the classroom.	**Agree**	**Disagree**
6. The classroom climate may affect how female students view themselves.	**Agree**	**Disagree**
7. Only male educators display discriminatory behaviour in the classroom.	**Agree**	**Disagree**
8. Nowadays, educators are informed about discrimination against females.	**Agree**	**Disagree**
9. Most teacher- training programs deal with the issue of inequity in the classroom.	**Agree**	**Disagree**
10. What is taught in the classroom is what will be reflected in the labour force.	**Agree**	**Disagree**
11. Females have the same intellectual capacities as males.	**Agree**	**Disagree**
12. Science is gender neutral.	**Agree**	**Disagree**
13. Female role models are seen frequently in textbooks and other resources materials.	**Agree**	**Disagree**
14. The language used in the classroom and in textbooks is gender neutral.	**Agree**	**Disagree**
15. Children should be prepared for a career suited to their gender.	**Agree**	**Disagree**

Comments:

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Appendix B: Focus Group Question Guideline

Focus Group Question Guideline

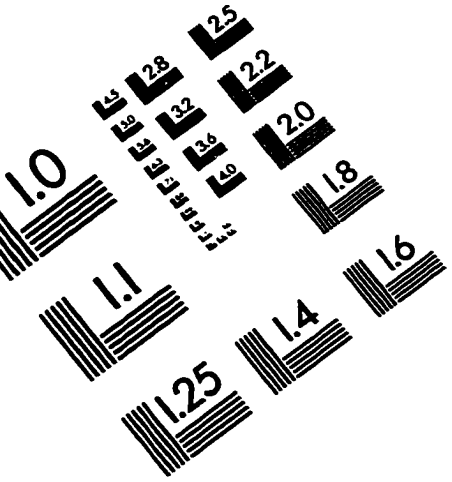
1. When talking about gender and education, what are some of the issues that are raised?
   - Which of these issues do you question?
   - What issues make you feel uncomfortable?
   - What have you personally learned about gender and education from your compulsory education class? (This is in reference to the class where the intervention was implemented.)
2. Have you ever witnessed gender inequity in the classroom?
   - How would you define inequity?
   - How would you define inequity in the classroom?
   - What are some behaviours that translate into the classroom?
   - What are possible consequences of inequity in the classroom?
3. Have you ever been affected by sex role stereotyping?
   - How would you define sex role stereotyping?
   - How would you define sex role stereotyping in schools?
   - What role does sex role stereotyping play in education?
   - What are some examples of sex role stereotyping in the classroom?

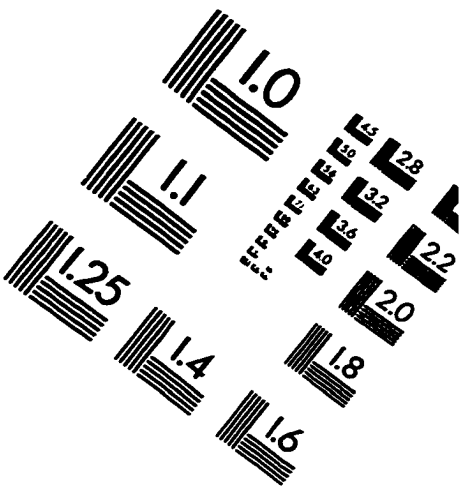
- What are some consequences of stereotyping in the classroom?

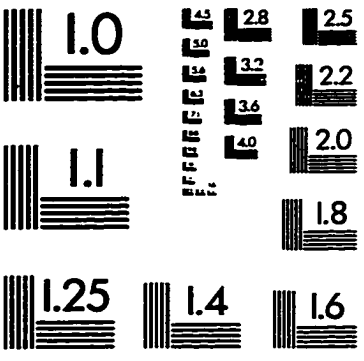
4. In your teacher preparation program are you exposed to alternative teaching strategies that are based on equitable principles?
5. When teaching do you use strategies that are equitable for all students?
6. Do you believe that it is important to use non-discriminatory and inclusive language?
   - How would you define discriminatory language?
   - What are some examples of discriminatory language?
   - How do we discriminate through language?

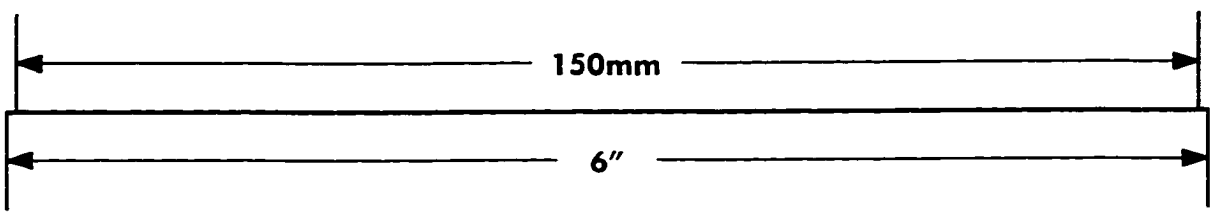
This question guideline was used in all five focus groups.

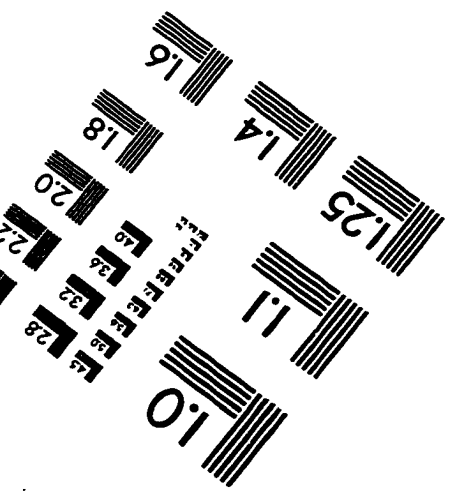
IMAGE EVALUATION TEST TARGET (QA-3)

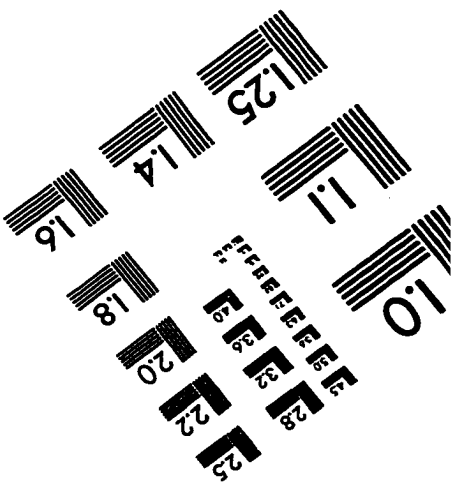












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